WILLIAM CAXTON,

THE FIRST ENGLISH PRINTER.

A Biography.

BY

CHARLES KNIGHT.

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NOTE.

The re-issue of Charles Knight's "The Old Printer" has been considered appropriate to the celebration of the Quarcentenary of the Introduction of Printing into England. The author himself was a worthy follower of Caxton, and his name marks an era in the spread of literature by means of the printing press.

No alteration has been made in the text of the work; but since its original publication considerable advances, as the reader will notice, have been made towards the fulfilment of the author's aspirations.

All profits arising from the sale of this volume will be devoted to the "Caxton Fund" now being formed in connection with the Celebration of the Quarcentenary of the Introduction of Printing into England.

June, 1877.

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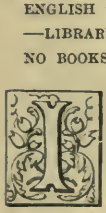

N the first book printed in the English language, the subject of which was the 'Histories of Troy,' William Caxton, the translator of the work from the French, in his prologue or preface, says, by way of apology for his simpleness and imperfectness in the French and English languages, "In France was I never, and was born and learned mine English in Kent, in the Weald, where I doubt not is spoken as broad and rude English as in any place of England." The Weald of Kent is now a fertile district, rich in corn-land and pasture, with farm-houses and villages spread over its surface, intersected by good roads, and a railway running through the heart of it,

bringing the scattered inhabitants closer and closer to each other. But at the period when William Caxton was born, and learnt his English in the Weald, it was a wild district with a scanty population; its inhabitants had little intercourse with the towns, the affairs of the busy world went on without their knowledge and assistance, they were more separated from the great body of their countrymen than a settler in Canada or Australia is at the present day. It is easy to understand therefore why they should have spoken a "broad and rude English" at the time of Caxton's boyhood, during the reign of Henry V. and the beginning of that of Henry VI. William Lambarde, who wrote a hundred and fifty years after this period, having published his 'Perambulation of Kent' in 1570, mentions as a common opinion touching this Weald of Kent, "that it was a great while together in manner nothing else but a desert and waste wilderness, not planted with towns or peopled with men as the outsides of the shire were, but stored and stuffed with herds of deer and droves of hogs only;" and he goes on to say that, "although the property of the Weald was at the first belonging to certain known owners, yet it was not then allotted into tenancies." The Weald of Kent came to be taken, he says, "even as men were contented to inhabit it, and by peacemeal to rid it of the wood, and to break it up with the plough." In some lonely farm, then, of this wild district, are we, upon the best of evidence, his own words, to fix the birth-place and the earliest home of the first English printer.

The father of William Caxton was in all probability a proprietor of land. At any rate, he desired to bestow upon his son all the advantages of education which that age could furnish. The honest printer, many years after his school-days, looks back upon that spring-time of his

life with feelings that make us honour the simple worth of his character. In his 'Life of Charles the Great,' printed in 1485, he says, "I have emprised [undertaken] and concluded in myself to reduce [translate] this said book into our English, as all along and plainly ye may read, hear, and see, in this book here following. Beseeching all them that shall find fault in the same to correct and amend it, and also to pardon me of the rude and simple reducing. And though so be there no gay terms, nor subtle nor new eloquence, yet I hope that it shall be understood, and to that intent I have specially reduced it after the simple cunning that God hath lent to me, whereof I humbly and with all my heart thank Him, and also am bounden to pray for my father's and mother's souls, that in my youth set me to school, by which, by the sufferance of God, I get my living I hope truly. And that I may so do and continue, I beseech Him to grant me of His grace; and so to labour and occupy myself virtuously, that I may come out of debt and deadly sin, that after this life I may come to His bliss in heaven." Caxton seems to have had the rare happiness to have had his father about him to a late period of his life. According to a record in the accounts of the churchwardens of the parish church of St. Margaret's, Westminster, in which parish the first printer carried on his business, it appears that one William Caxton, who is conjectured to have been the father, was buried on the 18th of May, 1480.

Some time before the period of Caxton's boyhood, a great change had taken place in the general system of education in England. In the time of Edward III., about half a century before the period of which we speak, the children in the grammar-schools were not taught English at all. It was the policy of the first Norman kings, long continued by their successors, to get rid of the old English

or Saxon language altogether; and to make the people familiar with the Norman French, the language of the conquerors. The new statutes of the realm were written in French; so were the decisions of the judges, and the commentaries on the laws in general. Ralph Higden, in a sort of chronicle which Caxton printed, says, "Children in schools, against the usage and manner of all other nations, be compelled for to leave their own language, and for to construe their lessons and their things in French; and so they have since Normans came first into England. Also gentlemen be taught for to speak French from the time that they rocked in their cradle, and can speak and play with a child's brooch [stick or other toy], and uplandishmen [countrymen] will liken themselves to gentlemen, and delight with great business for to speak French, to be told of." John de Trevisa, the translator of Higden's 'Polychronicon,' writing some forty years later, "This manner was much used before the Great Plague, and is since some deal changed; for Sir John Cornewaile, a master of grammar, changed the teaching in grammar-schools, and construction in French; and other schoolmasters use the same way now, in the year of our Lord 1385, the ninth year of King Richard II., and leave all French in schools, and use all construction in English. Wherein they have advantage one way:—that is, that they learn the sooner their grammar; and in another, disadvantage, for now they learn no French, which is hurt for them that shall pass the sea." It was this change of system, operating upon his early instruction, which caused Caxton, as a translator, to be so diffident of his own capacity to render faithfully what was before him out of French into English. Indeed from his earliest youth to the close of his literary career, the English language was constantly varying, through the

introduction of new words and phrases; and there was a marked distinction between the courtly dialect and that of the commonalty. We have seen how he speaks of the broad and rude English of his native Weald. But towards the close of his life, in a book printed by him in 1490, he mentions the difficulty he had in pleasing "some gentlemen, which late blamed me, saying, that in my translations I had over curious terms, which could not be understood of common people, and desired me to use old and homely terms in my translations. And fain would I satisfy every man; and so to do, took an old book and read therein; and certainly the English was so rude and broad that I could not well understand it. And also my Lord Abbot of Westminster did show to me late certain evidences written in old English, for to reduce it into our English now used, and certainly it was written in such wise that it was more like to Dutch than English; I could not reduce nor bring it to be understood. And certainly our language now used varieth far from that which was used and spoken when I was born: for we Englishmen be born under the denomination of the moon, which is never steadfast, but ever wavering, waxing one season, and waneth and decreaseth another season; and that common English that is spoken in one shire varieth from another. Insomuch that in my days happened that certain merchants were in a ship in Thames, for to have sailed over the sea into Zealand, and for lack of wind they tarried at Foreland, and went to land for to refresh them; and one of them named Sheffelde, a mercer, came into an house and asked for meat, and especially he asked after *eggs;* and the good wife answered, that she could speak no French; and the merchant was angry, for he also could speak no French, but would have had eggs, and she understood him not. And then at last another said that he would have

eyren; then the good wife said that she understood him well. Lo, what should a man in these days now write, *eggs* or *eyren?* certainly it is hard to please every man, by cause of diversity and change of language. For in these days every man that is in any reputation in his country will utter his communication and matters in such manners and terms that few men shall understand them. And some honest and good clerks have been with me, and desired me to write the most curious terms that I could find. And thus between plain, rude, and curious, I stand abashed; but in my judgment, the common terms that be daily used be lighter [easier] to be understood than the old and ancient English." In these days, when the same language with very slight variations is spoken from one end of the land to the other, it is difficult to imagine a state of things such as Caxton describes, in which the "common English which is spoken in one shire varieth from another," and there was a marked distinction between plain terms and curious terms. Easy and rapid communication, and above all the circulation of books, newspapers, and other periodical works, all free from provincial expressions, have made the "over curious terms which could not be understood of common people" more familiar to them than the "old and homely terms" which their forefathers used in their several counties, according to the restricted meanings which they retained in their local use. When there were no books amongst the community in general, there could be no universality of language. Of this want of books we may properly exhibit some details, chiefly to show one of the most remarkable differences which the lapse of four centuries has produced in our country.

We shall find it, we think, a more agreeable, as well as more instructive course, to look at the general subject of the supply of books in connection with the orders of people

who were to use them, rather than presenting a number of scattered facts, to exhibit the relative prices and scarcity of books in what are called the middle ages. We will first take the clergy, the scholars of those days. The mode in which books were multiplied by transcribers in the monasteries is clearly described by Richard de Bury, bishop of Durham, in his 'Philobiblon,' a treatise on the love of books, written by him in Latin in 1344:—"As it is necessary for a state to provide military arms, and prepare plentiful stores of provisions for soldiers who are about to fight, so it is evidently worth the labour of the church militant to fortify itself against the attacks of pagans and heretics with a multitude of sound books. But because everything that is serviceable to mortals suffers the waste of mortality through lapse of time, it is necessary for volumes corroded by age to be restored by renovated successors, that perpetuity, repugnant to the nature of the individual, may be conceded to the species. Hence it is that Ecclesiastes significantly says, in the 12th chapter, 'There is no end of making many books.' For as the bodies of books suffer continual detriment from a combined mixture of contraries in their composition, so a remedy is found out by the prudence of clerks, by which a holy book paying the debt of nature may obtain an hereditary substitute, and a seed may be raised up like to the most holy deceased, and that saying of Ecclesiasticus, chapter 30, be verified, 'The father is dead, and as it were not dead, for he hath left behind him a son like unto himself.'" The invention of paper, about a century and a half before Richard de Bury wrote, and its general employment instead of vellum for manuscripts in ordinary use, was a great step towards the multiplication of books. Transcribers necessarily became more numerous; but for a long period they wholly belonged to the monastic orders, and the books were

essentially for the use of the clergy. Richard de Bury says, with the most supreme contempt for all others, whatever be their rank, "Laymen, to whom it matters not whether they look at a book turned wrong side upwards or spread before them in its natural order, are altogether unworthy of any communion with books." But even to the privileged classes he is not sparing of his reproach as to the misuse of books. He reprobates the unwashed hands, the dirty nails, the greasy elbows leaning upon the volume, the munching of fruit and cheese over the open leaves, which were the marks of careless and idle readers. With a solemn reverence for a book at which we may smile, but with a smile of respect, he says, "Let there be a mature decorum in opening and closing of volumes, that they may neither be unclasped with precipitous haste, nor thrown aside after inspection without being duly closed." The good bishop bestowed certain portions of his valuable library upon a company of scholars residing in a Hall at Oxford; and one of his chapters is entitled 'A provident arrangement by which books may be lent to strangers,' meaning, by strangers, students of Oxford not belonging to that Hall. One of these arrangements is as follows:—"Five of the scholars dwelling in the aforesaid Hall are to be appointed by the master of the same Hall, to whom the custody of the books is to be deputed. Of which five, three, and in no case fewer, shall be competent to lend any books for inspection and use only; but for copying and transcribing we will not allow any book to pass without the walls of the house. Therefore, when any scholar, whether secular or religious, whom we have deemed qualified for the present favour, shall demand the loan of a book, the keepers must carefully consider whether they have a duplicate of that book; and if so, they may lend it to him,

taking a security which in their opinion shall exceed in value the book delivered." Anthony Wood, who in the seventeenth century wrote the lives of eminent Oxford men, speaks of this library which was given to Durham College (now Trinity College) as containing more books than all the bishops of England had then in their custody. He adds, "After they had been received they were for many years kept in chests, under the custody of several scholars deputed for that purpose." In the time of Henry IV. a library was built in that college, and then, says Wood, "the said books were put into pews, or studies, and chained to them." The statutes of St. Mary's College, Oxford, in the reign of Henry VI., are quoted by Warton, in his 'History of English Poetry,' as furnishing a remarkable instance of the inconveniences and impediments to study which must have been produced by a scarcity of books: "Let no scholar occupy a book in the library above one hour, or two hours at most, so that others shall be hindered from the use of the same." This certainly shows the scarcity of books; but not such a scarcity as at an early period of the Church, when one book was given out by the librarian to each of a religious fraternity at the beginning of Lent, to be read diligently during the year, and to be returned the following Lent. The original practice of keeping the books in chests would seem to indicate that they could not be very frequently changed by the readers; and the subsequent plan of chaining them to the desks gives the notion that, like many other things tempting by their rarity, they could not be safely trusted in the hands of those who might rather covet the possession than the use. It was a very common thing to write in the first leaf of a book, "Cursed be he who shall steal or tear out the leaves, or in any way injure this book."

We have abundant evidence, whatever be the scarcity of books as compared with the growth of scholarship, that the ecclesiastics laboured most diligently to multiply books for their own establishments. In every great abbey there was a room called the Scriptorium, where boys and novices were constantly employed in multiplying the service-books of the choir, and the less valuable books for the library; whilst the monks themselves laboured in their cells upon bibles and missals. Equal pains were taken in providing books for those who received a liberal education

Transcriber at Work.

in collegiate establishments. Warton says, "At the foundation of Winchester College, one or more transcribers were hired and employed by the founder to make books for the library. They transcribed and took their commons within the college, as appears by computations of expenses on their account now remaining." But there are several indications that even kings and nobles had not the advantages of scholars by profession; and, possessing few books of their own, had sometimes to borrow of their more favoured subjects. We find it recorded that the Prior of Christ Church, Canterbury, had lent to King Henry V.

the works of St. Gregory, and he complains that after the king's death the book had been detained by the Prior of Shene. The same king had borrowed from the Lady Westmoreland two books that had not been returned, and a petition is still extant in which she begs his successors in authority to let her have them back again. Lewis XI. of France wishing to borrow a book from the Faculty of Medicine at Paris, they would not allow the king to have it till he had deposited a quantity of valuable plate in pledge, and given a joint bond with one of his nobles for its due return. The books that were to be found in the palaces of the great, a little while before the invention of printing, were for the most part highly illuminated manuscripts, and bound in the most expensive style. In the wardrobe accounts of King Edward IV. we find that Piers Bauduyn is paid for "binding, gilding, and dressing" of two books, twenty shillings each, and of four books, sixteen shillings each. Now twenty shillings in those days would have bought an ox. But the cost of this binding and garnishing does not stop here; for there were delivered to the binder six yards of velvet, six yards of silk, laces, tassels, copper and gilt clasps, and gilt nails. The price of velvet and silk in those days was enormous. We may reasonably conclude that these royal books were as much for show as for use. One of the books thus garnished by Edward IV.'s binder is called 'Le Bible Historiaux' (The Historical Bible), and there are several copies of the same book in manuscript in the British Museum. In one of them the following paragraph is written in French: "This book was taken from the King of France at the battle of Poitiers; and the good Count of Salisbury, William Mountague, bought it for a hundred marks, and gave it to his lady Elizabeth, the good Countess. . . . . Which book the said Countess assigned to her executors

to sell for forty livres." We learn from another source that the great not only procured books by purchase, but employed transcribers to make them for their libraries. We find, from the manuscript account of the expenses of Sir John Howard, afterwards Duke of Norfolk, that in 1467 Thomas Lympnor, that is, Thomas the Limner, of Bury, was paid the sum of fifty shillings and twopence for a book which he had transcribed and ornamented, including the vellum and binding. The Limner's bill is made up of a number of items,—for whole vignettes, and half vignettes, and capital letters, and flourishing, and plain writing. This curious account is printed in the 'Paston Letters.' A letter of Sir John Paston, who is writing to his mother in 1474, shows how scarce money was in those days for the purchase of luxuries like books. He says, "As for the books that were Sir James's (the Priest's), if it like you that I may have them, I am not able to buy them, but somewhat would I give, and the remainder, with a good devout heart, by my troth, I will pray for his soul. . . . . If any of them are claimed hereafter, in faith I will restore it." The custom of borrowing books and not returning them was as old, we see, as the days of the Red and White Roses. John Paston left an inventory of his books, eleven in number, although some of the eleven contained various little tracts bound together. One of the items in this catalogue is, "A Book of Troilus, which William B—— hath had near ten years, and lent it to Dame Wingfeld, and there I saw it."

But, even in the days before printing, there was a small book-trade; and schemes were devised for making books of some general use. In Paris, in the middle of the 14th century, the booksellers were commanded to keep books for hire; and, in a register of the University of Paris, Chevillier found a list of the books so circulated, and the

price of reading each. The hire of a Bible was ten sous. That the ecclesiastics and lawyers constituted the great bulk of readers, and that the addition of a book, even to the private library of a student, was a rare occurrence, is evident from the absolute necessity for manuscript books being dear. If the number of readers had increased—if there had been more candidates for the learned professions —if the nobility had discovered the shame of their ignorance—if learning had made its way to the franklin's hall—manuscript books could never have been cheap. But from the hour when a first large expense of transferring the letters, syllables, words, and sentences of a manuscript to movable type was ascertained to be the means of multiplying copies to the extent of any demand, then the greater the demand the greater the cheapness.

If the nobles, the higher gentry, and even the lawyers and ecclesiastics, were indifferently provided with books, we cannot expect that the yeomen had any books whatever. The merchants and citizens were probably somewhat better provided. The labourers, who were scarcely yet fully established in their freedom from bondage to one lord, were probably, as a class, wholly unable to use books at all. Shakspere, in all likelihood, did not much exaggerate the feelings of ignorant men, who at the same time were oppressed men, when he puts these words in the mouth of Jack Cade when addressing Lord Say: "Thou hast most traitorously corrupted the youth of the realm, in erecting a grammar-school: and whereas, before, our forefathers had no other books but the score and the tally, thou hast caused printing to be used; and, contrary to the king, his crown and dignity, thou hast built a paper-mill." The poet has a little deranged the exact order of events, as poets are justified in doing, who look at history not with chronological accuracy, but with a

broad view of the connection between events and principles. The insurrection of Cade preceded the introduction of printing and paper-mills into England. Although during four centuries we have yet to lament that the people have not had the full benefit which the art of printing is calculated to bestow upon them, we may be sure that during its progress the general amelioration of society has been certain, though gradual. There can no longer be any necessary exclusiveness in the possession of books, and in the advantages which the knowledge of books is calculated to bestow on all men. The late Mr. Southey, a just and liberal thinker, but, like many others of ardent feelings, sometimes mistaken and oftener misrepresented, has truly pointed out the difference between the state of society when William Caxton was raised up to do his work amongst us and the present state. The following is an extract from his 'Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society:' "One of the first effects of printing was to make proud men look upon learning as disgraced, by being thus brought within reach of the common people. Till that time learning, such as it was, had been confined to courts and convents, the low birth of the clergy being overlooked, because they were privileged by their order. But when laymen in humble life were enabled to procure books, the pride of aristocracy took an absurd course, insomuch that at one time it was deemed derogatory for a nobleman if he could read or write. Even scholars themselves complained that the reputation of learning, and the respect due to it, and its rewards, were lowered when it was thrown open to all men: and it was seriously proposed to prohibit the printing of any book that could be afforded for sale below the price of three soldi. This base and invidious feeling was perhaps never so directly avowed in other countries

as in Italy, the land where literature was first restored; and yet in this more liberal island ignorance was for some generations considered to be a mark of distinction by which a man of gentle birth chose, not unfrequently, to make it apparent that he was no more obliged to live by the toil of his brain than by the sweat of his brow. The same changes in society, which rendered it no longer possible for this class of men to pass their lives in idleness, have completely put an end to this barbarous pride. It is as obsolete as the fashion of long finger-nails, which in some parts of the East are still the distinctive mark of those who labour not with their hands. All classes are now brought within the reach of your current literature,—that literature which, like a moral atmosphere, is, as it were, the medium of intellectual life, and on the quality of which, according as it may be salubrious or noxious, the health of the public mind depends."

CHAPTER II.

THE MERCER'S APPRENTICE—HIS BOOK-KNOWLEDGE—COMMERCE IN BOOKS —SCHOOLS IN LONDON—CITY APPRENTICES—CITY PAGEANTS—SPREAD OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE — ENGLISH WRITERS — CHAUCER — GOWER — LYDGATE—THE MINSTRELS—NATIONAL LITERATURE.

N a book which Caxton printed in 1483, 'The Booke callyd Cathon,' he says in his prologue or preface, "Unto the noble, ancient, and renowned city, the city of London in England, I, William Caxton, citizen and conjury [sworn fellow] of the same, and of the fraternity and fellowship of the Mercery, owe of right my service and good will; and of very duty am bounden naturally to assist, aid, and counsel, as farforth as I can to my power, as to my mother of whom I have received my nurture and living; and shall pray for the good prosperity and policy of the

same during my life. For as me seemeth it is of great need, by cause I have known it in my young age much more wealthy, prosperous, and richer than it is at this day; and the cause is, that there is almost none that intendeth to the common weal, but only every man for his singular profit." It is the usual habit of the aged to look back upon the days of their youth as a period of higher prosperity and more exalted virtue, public and private, than they witness in their declining years. This is in most cases merely the mind's own colouring of the picture. But it is very possible that London, in the first year of Richard III., when Caxton wrote this preface, was really less prosperous, and its citizens less devoted to the public good, than half a century earlier, when Caxton was a blithe apprentice within its walls. The country had passed through the terrible convulsion of the wars of the Roses; and it is the nature of civil wars, especially, not only to waste the substance and destroy the means of existence of every man, but to render all men selfish, grasping at temporary good, suspicious, faithless. The master of Caxton was Robert Large, a member of the Mercers' Company, who was one of the Sheriffs in 1430, and Lord Mayor in 1439–40. The date of Caxton's apprenticeship has not been ascertained; but it is considered by several of his biographers to have commenced about 1428. At this period, the sixth of Henry VI., a law was on the statute-book, and rigorously enforced, whose object was to prevent the sons of labourers in husbandry, and indeed of the poorer classes of the yeomanry, from rising out of the condition in which they were born, by participating in the higher gains of trade and handicraft. A law of the seventh of Henry IV., about two-and-twenty years before this conjectural period of Caxton's apprenticeship, recites that, according to ancient statutes, those who

labour at the plough or cart, or other service of husbandry, till at the age of twelve years, should continue to abide at such labour, and not to be put to any mystery or handicraft;—notwithstanding which statutes, says the law of Henry IV., country people whose fathers and mothers have no land or rent are put apprentices to divers crafts within the cities and boroughs, so that there is great scarcity of labourers and other servants of husbandry. The law then declares, "That no man nor woman, of what estate or condition they be, shall put their son or daughter, of whatsoever age he or she be, to serve as apprentice to no craft or other labour within any city or borough in the realm, except he have land or rent to the value of twenty shillings by the year at least, but they shall be put to other labours as their estates doth require, upon pain of one year's imprisonment." This iniquitous law was necessarily as demoralizing and as injurious to the national prosperity as the institution of castes in India. Yet, by a most extraordinary blindness to cause and consequence, the makers of the law provided in the most direct way for its overthrow; for the statute goes on to say, that, although the husbandry labourer is always to be a labourer, "every man or woman, of what estate or condition they be, shall be free to set their son or daughter to take learning at any manner school that pleaseth them within the realm." The citizens of London, much to their honour, procured a repeal of this act in the eighth of Henry VI., about the period when Caxton was apprenticed. The probability is, that he would not have been affected by the exclusive character of this law; for his master was a rich and distinguished mercer—a member of that association which has always had pre-eminence amongst the livery companies of London. The dignified gravity, the prudence, and the prosperity of

the citizens of that day have been well described by Chaucer :—

"A Merchant was there with a forkéd beard;
In motley, and high on horse he sat,
And on his head a Flaundrish beaver hat.
His bootés claspéd fair and fetisly;*
His reasons spake he full solemnely,
Sounding alway the increase of his winning:
He would the sea were kept † for any thing,
Betwixen Middleburgh and Oréwell.
Well could he in exchanges shieldiés ‡ sell,
This worthy man full well his wit beset; §
There wisté no wight that he was in debt,
So stedfastly did he his governance
With his bargains, and with his chevisance." ‖

When we look at William Caxton as the apprentice to a London mereer, his position does not at first sight appear very favourable to that cultivation of a literary taste, and that love of books, which was originally the solace, and afterwards the business, of his life. Yet a closer insight into the mercantile arrangements of those days will show us that he could not have been more favourably placed for attaining some practical acquaintance with books, in the way of his ordinary occupation. When books were so costly and so inaccessible to the great body of the people, there was necessarily no special trade of bookselling. There were indeed stationers, who had books for sale, or more probably executed orders for transcribing books. Their occupation is thus described by Mr. Hallam, in his 'Literature of Europe :'—"These dealers were denominated stationarii, perhaps from the open stalls at which they carried on their business, though

* Neatly. † Guarded.
‡ French crowns, which were stamped with a shield.
§ Employed. ‖ An agreement for borrowing money.

statio is a general word for a shop, in low Latin. They appear by the old statutes of the university of Paris, and by those of Bologna, to have sold books upon commission; and are sometimes, though not uniformly, distinguished from the librarii; a word which, having originally been confined to the copyists of books, was afterwards applied to those who traded in them. They sold parchment and other materials of writing, which, with us, though, as far as I know, nowhere else, have retained the name of stationery, and naturally exercised the kindred occupations of binding and decorating. They probably employed transcribers." The mercer in those days was not a dealer in small wares generally, as at an earlier period; nor was his trade confined to silken goods—such an one as Shakspere describes, "Master Threepile, the mercer," who had thrown a man into prison for "some four suits of peach-coloured satin." The mercer of the fifteenth century was essentially a merchant. The mercers in the time of Edward III. were the great wool-dealers of the country. They were the merchants of the Staple, in the early days of our woollen manufacture; and the merchant adventurers of a later period were principally of their body. In their traffic with other lands, and especially with the Low Countries, they were the agents by which valuable manuscripts found their way into England; and in this respect they were something like the great merchant princes of Italy, whose ships not unfrequently contained a cargo of Indian spices and of Greek manuscripts. John Bagford, who wrote a slight Life of Caxton about 1714, which is in manuscript in the British Museum, says, "Kings, queens, and noblemen had their particular merchants, who, when they were ready for their voyage into foreign parts, sent their servants to know what they wanted, and among the

rest of their choice many times books were demanded, and there to buy them in those parts where they were going." Caxton tells us in the 'Book of Good Manners,' which he translated from the French and printed in 1487, that the original French work was delivered to him by a "special friend, a mercer of London, named William Praat." This commerce of books could not have been very great; but it might have been so far carried on by Robert Large, the wealthy master of Caxton, that a lad of ability might thus possess opportunities for improvement which were denied to the great body of his fellow-apprentices. At this particular period there appear to have been but few opportunities even for the sons of parents of some substance to obtain the rudiments of knowledge. There is a petition presented to Parliament in the twenty-fifth year of Henry VI., 1446, which exhorts the Commons "to consider the great number of grammar-schools that sometime were in divers parts of this realm, besides those that were in London, and how few there are in these days." The petitioners, who are four clergymen of the city, go on to say that London is the common concourse of this land, and that many persons, for lack of schoolmasters in their own country, resort there to be informed of grammar; and then they proceed thus: "Wherefore it were expedient that in London were a sufficient number of schools and good informers in grammar; and not, for the singular avail of two or three persons, grievously to hurt the multitude of young people of all this land. For where there is great number of learners and few teachers, and all the learners be compelled to go to the few teachers, and to none others, the masters wax rich of money, and the learners poorer in cunning, as experience openly showeth, against all virtue and order of weal public." These benevolent clergymen accomplished the object of their

petition, which was that in each of their parishes they might "ordain, create, establish, and set a person sufficiently learned in grammar to hold and exercise a school in the same science of grammar, and there to teach to all that will learn." One of the schools thus established exists to this day, in connection with the Mercers' Company, and is commonly known as the Mercers' School. We are a little anticipating the period of our narrative, for this petition belongs to Caxton's mature life; but we mention it as an evidence of the extreme difficulty which must have existed in those days for the children of the middle classes to obtain the rudiments of knowledge. It is evident that Caxton belonged to the more fortunate portion, upon whom the blessings of education fell like prizes in a lottery. The evil has not been wholly corrected even during four centuries; but it is devoutly to be hoped that the time is not far distant when, to use the words of the benevolent clergymen who knew the value of knowledge at that comparatively dark period, there shall be in every place a school, and a competent person "there to teach to all that will learn."

Oldys, the writer of the Life of Caxton in the 'Biographia Britannica,' says, speaking of Robert Large, the master of Caxton, "The same magistrate held his mayoralty in that which had been the mansion-house of Robert Fitzwalter, anciently called the Jews' Synagogue, at the north corner of the Old Jewry." This Old Jewry appears to have been in earlier times an accustomed place of residence for the mercers; for there are records still extant of legal proceedings in the time of Henry III. against four mercers of that place, for a violent assault upon two Lombard merchants, whom they regarded as rivals in trade. In the days of their retail dealings they occupied a portion of Cheapside which went by the name of the Mercery.

In the fourteenth century their shops were little better than sheds, and Cheapside, or more properly Cheap, was a sort of market, where various trades collected round the old Cross, which remained there till the time of the Long Parliament. When the mercers became large wholesale dealers in woollen cloths and silk, the haberdashers took up their standing in the same place. In the ballad of 'London Lickpenny,' written in the time of Henry VI., the scene in the Cheap is thus described:—

> "Then to the Cheap I began me drawn,
> Where much people I saw for to stand;
> One offered me velvet, silk, and lawn,
> Another he taketh me by the hand,
> 'Here is Paris thread, the finest in the land.'"

The city apprentice in the days of Caxton was a staid sober youth, who, although of gentle blood (as the regulations for the admittance of freemen required him to be), was meanly clothed, and subjected to the performance of even household drudgery. We learn from a tract called the 'City's Advocate,' printed in 1628, that the ancient habit of the apprentices was a flat round cap, hair close cut, narrow falling bands, coarse side-coats (long coats), close hose, close stockings, and other such severe apparel. They walked before their masters and mistresses at night, bearing a lantern, and wearing a long club on their necks. But the mercer's apprentice had some exceptions which set him above his fellows: "Anciently it was the general use and custom of all apprentices in London (mercers only excepted, being commonly merchants and a better rank as it seems) to carry water-tankards to serve their masters' houses with water fetched either from the Thames or the common conduits." But, with all his restraints, the city apprentice was ever prone to frolic, and too often to mischief. The apprentices were a formidable body in the

days of the Tudors, sometimes defying the laws, and raising tumults which have more than once ended in the prison and the halter. Chaucer, writing some few years before the term of Caxton's service, describes the love of sight-seeing which was characteristic of the London apprentice :—

> "When there any ridings were in Cheap,
> Out of the shop thither would he leap;
> And till that he had all the sight yseen,
> And danced well, he would not come again."

Cheap was the great highway of processions; and London was the constant theatre of triumphs and pageants, by which the wealthy citizens expressed their devotion to their ruling authorities. In the fifteenth century, when the very insecurity of the tenure of the crown demanded a more ardent display of public opinion, the London apprentice had "ridings" enough to look upon, where the pageantry was a real expression of power and magnificence, and not a tawdry mockery, as that which now disgraces the city of London once a year. Froissart describes the riding of Henry IV. to his coronation. The entry of his illustrious son into London after the battle of Agincourt was another of these remarkable ridings. This, which was an occasion of real enthusiasm, took place in Caxton's childhood. But in 1432, when he is held to have been an apprentice, the boy king, Henry VI., upon his return from being crowned King of France, entered London with a magnificence which chroniclers and poets have vied in recording. Robert Fabyan, an alderman of London, who wrote in the reign of Henry VII., describes this ceremonial with such an admiration of the pomp as only one could be supposed to feel who was born, as Chaucer says,

> "To sitten in a guildhall on the dais."

To look forward to such occasions of pomp was a satisfaction to the people, who knew nothing of the real workings

of public affairs, and saw only the outward indications of success or misfortune. The reign of Henry VI. was an unhappy one for the citizens of London. Violent contests for authority, insurrections, battles for the crown, left their fearful traces upon the course of the next thirty years. But during Caxton's boyhood the evil days seemed distant.

In the books of the Brewers' Company, which, like all other records, were for the most part in Norman French, there is a curious entry in the reign of Henry V., which records a great change in the habits of the people. The entry is in Latin, and is thus translated: "Whereas our mother-tongue, to wit, the English language, hath in modern days begun to be honourably enlarged and adorned, for that our most excellent lord King Henry the Fifth, hath in his letters missive, and divers affairs touching his own person, more willingly chosen to declare the secrets of his will; and for the better understanding of his people hath, with a diligent mind, procured the common idiom (setting aside others) to be commended by the exercise of writing; and there are many of our craft of brewers who have the knowledge of writing and reading in the said English idiom, but in others, to wit, the Latin and French, before these times used, they do not in any wise understand; for which causes, with many others, it being considered how that the greater part of the lords and trusty commons have begun to make their matters to be noted down in our mother-tongue, so we also in our craft, following in some manner their steps, have decreed in future to commit to memory the needful things which concern us, as appeareth in the following."

The assertion of the Brewers' Company, in the reign of Henry V., that "the English language hath in modern days begun to be honourably enlarged and adorned," rested, we apprehend, upon broader foundations than the

"letters missive" of the king in the common idiom. Great writers had arisen in our native tongue, with whose productions the nobler and wealthier classes at any rate were familiar. The very greatest of these, —the greatest name even now in our literature, with one exception,—must have furnished employment to hundreds of transcribers. The poems of Geoffrey Chaucer were familiar to all well-educated men, however scanty was the supply of copies and dear their cost. That Caxton himself was acquainted in his youth with these great works we cannot have a doubt. When it became his fortunate lot to multiply editions of the Canterbury Tales, and to render them accessible to a much larger class of the people than in the days when he himself first knew the solace and the delight of literature, he applied himself to the task with all the earnestness of an early love. In his preface to the second edition of the Canterbury Tales he thus delivers himself, with more than common enthusiasm: "Great thanks, laud, and honour ought to be given unto the clerks, poets, and historiographs that have written many noble books of wisdom of the lives, passions, and miracles of holy saints, of histories, of noble and famous acts and faits [deeds], and of the chronicles sith [since] the beginning of the creation of the world unto this present time; by which we are daily informed and have knowledge of many things, of whom we should not have known if they had not left to us their monuments written. Amongst whom, and in especial before all other, we ought to give a singular laud unto that noble and great philosopher Geoffrey Chaucer, the which, for his ornate writing in our tongue, may well have the name of a laureat poet. For before that he, by his labour, embellished, ornated, and made fair our English, in this royaume [kingdom] was had rude speech and incongrue [incongruous], as yet it

appeareth by old books, which at this day ought not to have place nor be compared among nor to his beauteous volumes and ornate writings, of whom he made many books and treatises of many a noble history, as well in metre as in rhyme and prose; and them so craftily made, that he comprehended his matters in short, quick, and high sentences; eschewing prolixity, casting away the chaff of superfluity, and shewing the picked grain of sentence, uttered by crafty and sugared eloquence." Again, in his edition of Chaucer's 'Book of Fame' he says, "Which work, as me seemeth, is craftily made, and worthy to be written and known: for he toucheth in it right great wisdom and subtle understanding; and so in all his works he excelleth in mine opinion all other writers in our English; for he writeth no void words, but all his matter is full of high and quick sentence, to whom ought to be given laud and praising for his noble making and writing. For of him all other have borrowed sith, and taken in all their well saying and writing." There is another passage in the second edition of the Canterbury Tales which we quote here, not for the purpose of showing Caxton's honourable character as a printer, for that belongs to a subsequent period, but to point out that manuscripts of Chaucer were in private hands, varying indeed in their text, as books must have varied that were produced by different transcribers, but still keeping up the fame of the poet, and highly valued by their possessors: "Of which book so incorrect was one brought to me six year passed, which I supposed had been very true and correct, and according to the same I did imprint a certain number of them, which anon were sold to many and divers gentlemen: of whom one gentleman came to me, and said that this book was not according in many places unto the book that Geoffrey Chaucer had made. To whom I answered, that I had made it according to my copy, and by me was

nothing added nor diminished. Then he said he knew a book which his father had and much loved, that was very true, and according unto his own first book by him made; and said more, if I would imprint it again, he would get me the same book for a copy. How be it, he wist well his father would not gladly part from it; to whom I said, in case that he could get me such a book true and correct, that I would once endeavour me to imprint it again, for to satisfy the author: whereas before by ignorance I erred in hurting and defaming his book in divers places, in setting in some things that he never said nor made, and leaving out many things that he made which are requisite to be set in. And thus we fell at accord; and he full gently got me of his father the said book, and delivered it to me, by which I have corrected my book."

There was another poet of considerable popularity who was contemporary with Chaucer. With the works of Gower, Caxton must have been familiar. His principal poem, 'Confessio Amantis,' was printed by Caxton in 1483, and is said to have been the most extensively circulated of all the books that came from his press. The poem is full of stories that were probably common to all Europe, running on through thousands of lines with wonderful fluency, but little force. He was called the "moral Gower" by Chaucer. The play of Pericles, ascribed to Shakspere, is founded upon one of these stories. Gower himself shows us what was the general course of reading in those days:—

"Full oft time it falleth so,
Mine ear with a good pittance
Is fed of reading of romance,
Of Idoyne, and of Amadas,
That whilom * weren † in my case,
And eke of other many a score,
That loveden ‡ long ere I was bore." §

* Formerly. † Were. ‡ Loved. § Born.

The romances of chivalry, the stories of "fierce wars and faithful loves," were especially the delight of the great and powerful. When the noble was in camp, he solaced his hours of leisure with the marvellous histories of King Arthur or Launcelot of the Lake; and when at home, he listened to or read the same stories in the intervals of the chase or the feast. Froissart tells in his own simple and graphic manner how he presented a book to King Richard the Second, and how the king delighted in the subject of the book: "Then the king desired to see my book that I had brought for him; so he saw it in his chamber, for I had laid it there ready on his bed. When the king opened it, it pleased him well, for it was fair illumined and written, and covered with crimson velvet, with ten buttons of silver and gilt, and roses of gold in the midst, with two great clasps, gilt, richly wrought. Then the king demanded me whereof it treated, and I showed him how it treated matters of love, whereof the king was glad, and looked in it, and read it in many places, for he could speak and read French very well." Froissart was a Frenchman and wrote in French; but even Englishmen wrote in French at that period, and some of Gower's early poems are in French. According to his own account, the long poem of the 'Confessio Amantis,' which was written in English, was executed at the command of the same King Richard:—

> "He hath this charge upon me laid,
> And bad me do my business,
> That to his high worthiness
> Some new thing I should book,
> That he himself it might look,
> After the form of my writing."

Chaucer and Gower lived some time before the period of Caxton's youth in London. But there was a poet very

popular in his day, whom he can scarcely have avoided having seen playing a conspicuous part in the high city festivals. This was John Lydgate, monk of Bury, who thus describes himself:

> "I am a monk by my profession,
> Of Bury, called John Lydgate by my name,
> And wear a habit of perfection,
> Although my life agree not with the same."

Thomas Warton has thus exhibited the nature of his genius: "No poet seems to have possessed a greater versatility of talents. He moves with equal ease in every mode of composition. His hymns and his ballads have the same degree of merit: and whether his subject be the life of a hermit or a hero, of Saint Austin or Guy Earl of Warwick, ludicrous or legendary, religious or romantic, a history or an allegory, he writes with facility. His transitions were rapid from works of the most serious and laborious kind to sallies of levity and pieces of popular entertainment. His muse was of universal access, and he was not only the poet of his monastery, but of the world in general. If a disguising was intended by the company of goldsmiths, a mask before his majesty at Eltham, a May game for the sheriffs and aldermen of London, a mumming before the lord mayor, a procession of pageants from the creation for the festival of Corpus Christi, or a carol for a coronation, Lydgate was consulted and gave the poetry." A fine illuminated drawing in one of Lydgate's manuscripts, now in the British Museum, represents him presenting a book to the Earl of Salisbury. Such a presentation may be regarded as the first publication of a new work. The royal or noble person at whose command it was written bestowed some rich gift upon the author, which would be his sole pecuniary recompense, unless he received some advantage from the transcribers, for the

copies which they multiplied. Doubtful as the rewards of authorship may be when the multiplication of copies by the press enables each reader to contribute a small acknowledgment of the benefit which he receives, the literary condition must have been far worse when the poet, humbly kneeling before some mighty man, as Lydgate does in the

Lydgate presenting a book to the Earl of Salisbury.

picture, might have been dismissed with contumely, or his present received with a low appreciation of the labour and the knowledge required to produce it. The fame, however, of a popular writer reached his ears in a far more direct and flattering manner than belongs to the literary honours of modern days. There can be little

doubt that the narrative poems of Chaucer and Gower and Lydgate were familiar to the people through the recitations of the minstrels. An agreeable writer on the Rise and Progress of English Poetry, Mr. George Ellis, says, "Chaucer, in his address to his Troilus and Cressida, tells us it was intended to be read 'or elles sung,' which must relate to the chanting recitation of the minstrels, and a considerable part of our old poetry is simply addressed to an audience, without any mention of readers. That our English minstrels at any time united all the talents of the profession, and were at once poets and reciters and musicians, is extremely doubtful; but that they excited and directed the efforts of their contemporary poets to a particular species of composition, is as evident as that a body of actors must influence the exertions of theatrical writers. They were, at a time when reading and writing were rare accomplishments, the principal medium of communication between authors and the public; and their memory in some measure supplied the deficiency of manuscripts, and probably preserved much of our early literature till the invention of printing." We may thus learn, that, although the number of those was very few whose minds by reading could be lifted out of the grovelling thoughts and petty cares of every-day life, yet that the compositions of learned and accomplished men, who still hold a high rank in our literature, might be familiar to the people through the agency of a numerous body of singers or reciters. There has been a good deal of controversy about the exact definition of the minstrel character—whether the minstrels were themselves poets and romance-writers, or the depositaries of the writings of others and of the traditional literature of past generations. Ritson, a writer upon this subject, says, "that there were individuals

formerly who made it their business to wander up and down the country chanting romances, and singing songs and ballads to the harp, fiddle, or more humble and less artificial instruments, cannot be doubted." They were a very numerous body a century before Chaucer; and most indefatigable in the prosecution of their trade. There is a writ or declaration of Edward the Second, which recites the evil of idle persons, under colour of minstrelsy, being received in other men's houses to meat and drink; and then goes on to direct that to the houses of great people no more than three or four minstrels of honour should come at the most in one day, "and to the houses of meaner men that none come unless he be desired, and such as shall come to hold themselves contented with meat and drink, and with such courtesy as the master of the house will show unto them of his own goodwill, without their asking of anything." Nothing can more clearly exhibit the general demand for the services of this body of men; for the very regulation as to the nature of their reward shows clearly that they were accustomed to require liberal payment, approaching perhaps to extortion; and then comes in the State to say that they shall not have a free market for their labour. They struggled on, sometimes prosperous and sometimes depressed, according to the condition of the country, till the invention of printing came to make popular literature always present in a man's house. The *book* of ballads or romances, which was then to be bought, was contented to abide there without any "meat and drink." In the words of Richard de Bury, whom we quoted in the first chapter, books "are the masters who instruct us without rods, without hard words and anger, without clothes and money. If you approach them, they are not asleep; if investigating you interrogate them, they conceal nothing; if you mistake them,

they never grumble; if you are ignorant, they cannot laugh at you." One of the later minstrels, to whom is ascribed the preservation, and by some the composition, of the old ballad of Chevy Chase, thus humbles himself in a most unpoetical and undignified manner to those who fed him for his services:—

"Now for the good cheer that I have had here
I give you hearty thanks with bowing of my shanks,
Desiring you by petition to grant me such commission—
Because my name is Sheale—that both for meat and meal
To you I may resort some time for my comfort.
For I perceive here at all times is good cheer,
Both ale, wine, and beer, as it doth now appear;
I perceive, without fable, ye keep a good table.
I can be content, if it be out of Lent,
A piece of beef to take, my hunger to aslake;
Both mutton and veal is good for Richard Sheale.
Though I look so grave, I were a very knave
If I would think scorn, either evening or morn,
Being in hunger, of fresh salmon or congar.
I can find in my heart with my friends to take a part
Of such as God shall send; and thus I make an end.
Now, farewell, good mine host; I thank you for your cost,
Until another time, and thus do I end my rhyme."

But even such a humiliated ballad-maker, or ballad-singer, as poor old Richard Sheale, was the depositary of treasures of popular fiction, many of which have utterly perished, but of which a great portion of those which are still preserved are delightful even to the most refined reader. For, corrupted as they are by transmission from mouth to mouth through several centuries, they are full of high and generous sentiments, of deep pathos, of quiet humour; they carry us back into a state of society wholly different from our own, when knowledge was indeed scanty, and riches not very plentiful, but when the feelings and affections were not so wholly under the direction of worldly

wisdom, and men were brave and loving, and women tender and confiding, with something more of earnestness than belongs to the discreeter arrangements of modern social life. The minstrels had indeed something to call up the tear or the smile in every class of auditor. For the earls and barons, the knights and squires, there were romances and songs of chivalrous daring, such as moved the noble heart of Sir Philip Sidney, even in the days when the minstrel was a poor despised wanderer: "Is it the Lyric that most displeaseth, who, with his tuned lyre and well-accorded voice, giveth praise, the reward of virtue, to virtuous acts? who giveth moral precepts and natural problems? who sometimes raiseth up his voice to the height of the heavens, in singing the lauds of the immortal God? Certainly I must confess mine own barbarousness, I never heard the old song of Percy and Douglas, that I found not my heart moved more than with a trumpet, and yet it is sung but by some blind crowder, with no rougher voice than rude style." For those of meaner sort there were the ballads of Robin Hood, "of whom the foolish vulgar make lewd entertainment, and are delighted to hear the jesters and minstrels sing them above all other ballads." So wrote a Scottish historian in the middle of the fourteenth century.

We have thus briefly recapitulated the popular modes of acquiring something of a literary taste in the early days of William Caxton. Books were rare, and difficult to be obtained except by the wealthy. The drama did not exist. The preachers, indeed, were not afraid to address an indiscriminate audience with the conviction that, although the majority were unlettered, they had vigorous understandings, and did not require the great truths of religion and of private and of social duty to be adapted to any intellectual weakness or infirmity. The

national poetry, which was heard at the high festivals of the city traders, and even descended to as lowly a popularity as that of the village circle upon the ale-bench under the spreading elm on a summer's eve, had no essentials of vulgarity or childishness, such as in later days have been thought necessary for general comprehension. We were ever a thoughtful people, a reasoning people, and yet a people of strong passions and unconquerable energy. A popular literature was kept alive and preserved, however imperfectly, before the press came to make those who had learnt to read self-dependent in their intellectual gratifications; and what has come down to us of the old minstrelsy, with all its inaccuracy and occasional feebleness, shows us that the people of England, four or five centuries ago, had a common fund of high thought upon which a great literature might in time be reared. The very existence of a poet like Chaucer is the best proof of the vigour, and to a certain extent of the cultivation, of the national mind, even in an age when books were rarities.

CHAPTER III.

CAXTON ABROAD—CAXTON'S MERCANTILE PURSUITS—RESTRICTIONS ON TRADE—CAXTON'S COMMISSION—MERCHANTS' MARKS—BEGINNINGS OF PRINTING—PLAYING CARDS—WOOD-ENGRAVING—BLOCK-BOOKS—MOVABLE TYPES—GUTTENBERG—GUTTENBERG'S STATUE—FESTIVAL AT MENTZ.

ROBERT LARGE, the master of Caxton, became Lord Mayor of London in 1439–40. He died in 1441. That he was a man of considerable substance appears by the record of his bequests in Stow's Survey of London: "Robert Large, mercer, mayor 1440, gave to his parish church of St. Olave, in Surrey, two hundred pounds; to St. Margaret's, in Lothbury, twenty-five pounds; to the poor, twenty pounds; to London-bridge, one hundred marks; towards the vaulting over the watercourse of Walbrook, two hundred marks; to poor maids' marriages, one hundred marks; to poor householders, one hundred pounds." * By his last will he bequeathed to his servant, William Caxton, twenty marks, a considerable sum in those days. From this period it would seem that Caxton resided abroad. In the first book he translated, the 'Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye,' which bears upon the title to have been "ended and finished in the holy city of Cologne, the 19th day of September, the year of our Lord one thousand, four hundred, sixty, and eleven," he says, "I have continued by the space of thirty year for the most part in the

* We believe that the text of Stow, "St. Olave in *Surrey*," is a mistake for "St. Olave in *Jewry*,"—for Robert Large was buried in St. Olave in the Jewry, where a plated stone in the ground, in the south aisle, recorded his death on the 24th of April, 1441.

countries of Brabant, Flanders, Holland, and Zealand." The Rev. John Lewis, who wrote the Life of Master William Caxton, about a century ago, says, "It has been guessed that he was abroad as a travelling agent or factor for the Company of Mercers, and employed by them in the business of merchandise." Oldys adds, but certainly without any authority, "It is agreed on by those writers who have best acquainted themselves with his story, he was deputed and intrusted by the Mercers' Company to be their agent or factor in Holland, Zealand, Flanders, &c., to establish and enlarge their correspondents, negociate the consumption of our own, and importation of foreign manufactures, and otherwise promote the advantage of the said corporation in their respective merchandise." This, indeed, was a goodly commission, if we can make out that he ever received such,—an employment which seems to speak of free and liberal intercourse between two countries, each requiring the commodities of the other, and conducting their interchange upon the sound principles of encouraging mutual consumption, and thus producing mutual profit. Doubtless, we may believe, upon a superficial view of the matter, that the agent of the Mercers' Company was conducting his operations with the full authority of the government at home, and with the hearty support of the rulers of the land in which he so long lived. The real fact is, that for twenty of those years in which Caxton describes himself as residing in the countries of Brabant, Holland, and Zealand, there was an absolute prohibition on both sides of all commercial intercourse between England and the Duchy of Burgundy, to which those countries were subject; and for nearly the whole period, no English goods were suffered to pass to the continent, except through the town of Calais; and "in France," says Caxton, "I was never." If Caxton had any

mercantile employment at all from his Company, it was, in all probability, for the purpose of finding channels in trade that were closed up by the blind policy of the respective governments. He could not have conducted any mercantile operation in those countries, except in violation of the absurd commercial laws which would not allow the people to seek their own interest in their own way. It is by no means improbable, however, that by the connivance of the royal personages who wanted for themselves rich commodities which they could only obtain by that exchange which they denied their subjects, William Caxton was in truth an accredited smuggler for law-makers who attempted to limit the wants, and the means of satisfying the wants, of the people they governed, in deference to the prejudices of those who thought that trade could only exist under a system of the most stringent prohibition.

While Edward the Fourth, and Charles the Good, Duke of Burgundy, were launching against each other ordinance and enactment to prevent their subjects becoming exchangers for the better supply of their respective wants, some politic understanding between these princes led them eventually to adopt a wiser system. It is pretty clear that William Caxton was one of the agents, and a principal one, in putting an end to a policy which the Duke of Burgundy said was "evermore to endure." In 1464 Edward the Fourth issued a commission to his trusty and well-beloved Richard Whitehill and William Caxton, to be his especial ambassadors, procurators, nuncios, and deputies to his most dear cousin the Duke of Burgundy for the purpose of confirming an existing treaty of commerce, or, if necessary, for making a new one. In 1466, this commission being dated in October 1464, a treaty was concluded with the Duke of Burgundy, by which the commerce between his dominions and England, which

had been interrupted for twenty years, was restored; and a port of Flanders was subsequently appointed to be a port of the English staple, as well as Calais. It is pleasant to us to believe that this extension of a principle which must eventually bind all nations in a common brotherhood was effected by the good sense of a mercer of London; who was afterwards to bestow upon his country the blessings of an art which has been the great instrument of that country's progress in real greatness and prosperity, and before which all impediments to the continued course of that prosperity—all prejudices amongst her own children, or amongst other peoples, that make the great family of mankind aliens and enemies, and keep them from the enjoyment of the advantages which each might bestow upon the other—will utterly perish. It is pleasant to us to believe that William Caxton, the first English printer, in his day opened the ports of one great trading community to another great trading community. When he, the mercer's apprentice, stamped the merchant's mark upon his master's bales, he knew not, he could not have divined, that by this process of stamping, carried forward by the ingenuity of many men into a new art, there would arise consequences which would change the face of the world. He could not imagine that he, whose education had consisted in learning to buy wool and measure cloth, should, by the natural course of his commercial life, be thrown into a society where a great wonder was to fill the minds of all men with astonishment—the multiplication of manuscripts by some new and secret process, as if by magic; and which some men, and he probably amongst the number, must have regarded with a higher feeling than wonder,—with something like that prophetic view of its consequences which have been described by the novelist, who, perhaps more than any man, has employed

that art to the delight of all classes in every country. We refer to the passage in Sir Walter Scott's 'Quentin Durward,' where Louis the Eleventh of France and Martivalle Galeotti the astrologer speak of the invention of printing, and the sage predicts "the lot of a succeeding generation, on whom knowledge will descend like the first and second rain, uninterrupted, unabated, unbounded, fertilizing some grounds, and overflowing others; changing the whole form of social life."

Merchants' Marks.

In a list of foreign goods forbidden to be imported into this country by statute of 1464, the reader might be surprised to find that playing-cards were of sufficient importance, from their general use, to require that the native manufactories should be protected in the production of them. Playing-cards were known in France for more than a hundred years before this statute of Edward IV.; so that the common notion that they were invented to furnish amusement to an insane king, Charles VI. of France, about 1393, is a popular error. It is clear that both in France and Spain at that period cards were the amusement not only of the royal and noble inmates of palaces, but of the burghers and the working people. The King of Castile, in 1387, prohibited cards altogether; and they appear, with other games of skill and chance, to have interfered so much with the regular labour of the artificers of Paris, that the provost of that city, in 1397, forbade all working people to play at tennis, bowls, nine-pins, dice,

or cards on working-days. The earliest cards were probably painted by means of a stencil, by which name we call a piece of pasteboard or plate of thin metal pierced with apertures, by which a figure is formed upon paper or other substance beneath it when fluid colour is smeared over its surface with a brush. But it has also been conjectured, from their being in the hands of the working-people, that their cheapness must have been produced by some rude application of a wood-engraving to form the outline which the stencilling process filled up with colour. There can be no doubt that cards were *printed* before the

Block and Stencil Instruments.

middle of the fifteenth century; for there is a petition extant from the Venetian *painters* to their magistracy, dated 1441, setting forth that the art and mystery of card-making and of *printing* figures, which were practised in Venice, had fallen into total decay, through the great quantity of foreign playing-cards and coloured printed figures which were brought into the city. The Germans were the great card-makers of this period; and the name by which a wood-engraver is still called in Germany, *Formschneider*, meaning figure-cutter, occurs in the town books of Nuremberg as early as 1441. Some of the early cards were very rude. Here is the Knave of Bells—for

spades, diamonds, hearts, and clubs were not then the universal symbols. Others called forth the skill of very clever artists, such as he who is known as "the Master of 1466," whose knave is a much more human knave than the traditionary worthy whom we look upon to this hour. When Caxton, therefore, was abroad for thirty years, he

Knave of Bells.

would unquestionably have seen every variety of these painted bits of paper; some rich with crimson and purple, oftentimes painted on a golden ground, and calling forth, like the missals, the highest art of the limner; others impressed with a rude outline, and daubed by the stenciller. It appears that the impressions of the engraved cards, as well as of most of the earlier block-prints, were taken

off by friction. This is the mode by which, even at the present day, wood-engravers take off the specimen impressions of their works called proofs. The Chinese produce their block-books in a similar manner, without the aid of a press.

But there was another application of engraved blocks, about the same period, which was approaching still nearer to the art of printing. The representations of saints and

Knave, of Master of 1466.

of scriptural histories, which the limners in the monasteries had for several centuries been painting in their missals and bibles, were copied in outline; and being divested of their brilliant colours and rich gilding, presented figures exceedingly rude in their want of proportion, and grotesque in their constrained and violent attitudes. But they were nevertheless highly popular; and as the pictures were accompanied with a few sentences from Scripture, they

probably supplied the first inducement to the laity to learn to read, and thus prepared the way for that diffusion of knowledge which was to accompany the invention of printing from movable types. In the collection of Earl Spencer there is a very curious print from a wood-block, representing St. Christopher carrying the Infant Saviour. This print bears the date 1423. It is probably not the earliest specimen of the art; but it is the earliest undoubted document which determines with precision the period when wood-engraving was generally applied to objects of devotion. In a very few years from the date of this print the art was carried onward to a more important object,—that of producing a *book*.

Several of such books are now in existence, and are known as block-books. One of them is commonly called 'Biblia Pauperum,' the Bible of the Poor. But an ingenious writer on the progress of woodcutting, in the valuable book on that subject published by Mr. John Jackson, has shown very clearly that this was not the original title of the book; and he adds that it was rather a book for the use of preachers than the laity:—"A series of skeleton sermons ornamented with woodcuts to warm the preacher's imagination, and stored with texts to assist his memory." This very rare book consists of forty leaves of small folio, each of which contains a cut in wood, with extracts from the Scriptures, and other illustrative sentences. Of other block-books the most remarkable is called 'Speculum Salutis,' the Mirror of Salvation. In this performance the explanations of the text are much fuller than in the 'Biblia Pauperum.' In addition to these works, wooden blocks were also used to print small manuals of grammar, called Donatuses, which were used in schools. We present a facsimile of a woodcut from one of the early block-books.

The Wise Men's Offering.

The use of carved blocks for the multiplication of copies of playing-cards and devotional pictures gave birth to a principle which has effected, and is still effecting, the most

important changes in the world. These devotional pictures had short legends or texts attached to them; and when a text had to be printed, it was engraved in a solid piece, as well as the picture. The first person who seized upon the idea that the text or legend might be composed of separate letters capable of re-arrangement after the impressions were taken off, so as to be applied, without new cutting, to other texts and legends, had secured the principle upon which the printing art was to depend. It was easy to extend the principle from a few lines to a whole page, and from one page to many, so as to form a book; but then were seen the great labour and expense of cutting so many separate letters upon small pieces of wood or metal, and another step was required to be made before the principle was thoroughly worked out. This step consisted in the ready multiplication of the separate letters by casting metal in moulds. Lastly, instead of using the old Chinese mode of friction to produce impressions, a *press* was to be perfected. All these gradations were undoubtedly the result of long and patient experiments carried on by several individuals, who each saw the importance of the notion they were labouring to work out. It is this circumstance which has given rise to interminable controversies as to the inventors of printing, some claiming the honour for Coster of Haarlem, and some for Guttenberg of Mentz; and, as is usual in all such disputes, it was represented that the man to whom public opinion had assigned the credit of the invention had stolen it from another, who, as is also usual in these cases, thought of it in a dream, or received it by some other mysterious revelation. The general consent of Europe now assigns the chief honour to Guttenberg.*

During the summer of 1837 a statue of John Guttenberg, by Thorwaldsen, was erected at Mentz (or Mayence), and

* See Appendix A.

on the 14th of August and the following days a festival was held there, upon the occasion of the inauguration of the monument. Abundant evidence has been brought forward of late years to show that Guttenberg deserves all the honours of having conceived, and in great part perfected, an art which has produced the most signal effects upon the destinies of mankind. At that festival of Mentz, at which many hundred persons were assembled, from all parts of Europe, to do honour to the inventor of printing, no rival pretensions were put forward; although many of the compatriots of Coster of Haarlem were present. The fine statue of Guttenberg was opened amidst an universal burst of enthusiasm. Never were the shouts of a vast multitude raised on a more elevating occasion; never were the triumphs of intellect celebrated with greater fervour.

Passing his life amidst the ceaseless activity that belongs to the commerce of literature in London, the writer of this volume felt no common interest in the enthusiasm which the festival in honour of Guttenberg called forth throughout Germany; and he determined to attend that celebration. The fine statue which was to be opened to public view on the 14th of August had been erected by a general subscription, to which all Europe was invited to contribute. We apprehend that the English, amidst the incessant claims upon their attention for the support of all sorts of undertakings, whether of a national or individual character, had known little of the purpose which the good citizens of Mentz had been advocating with unabated zeal for several years; and perhaps the object itself was not calculated to call forth any very great liberality on the part of those who are often directed in their bounties as much by fashion as by their own convictions. Thus it is that we have monuments out of number to warriors.

Caxton has no monument; neither has Shakspere. Be that as it may, England literally gave nothing towards the statue of a man whose invention has done as much as any other single cause to make England what she is. The remoteness of the cause may also have lessened its importance; and some people, who, without any deserts of their own, are enjoying a more than full share of the blessings which have been shed upon us by the progress of intellect (which determines the progress of national wealth), have a sort of instinctive notion that the spread of knowledge is the spread of something inimical to the pretensions of mere riches. We met with a lady on board the steamboat ascending the Rhine, two days before the festival of Mentz, who, whilst she gave us an elaborate account of the fashionable dulness of the baths of Baden and Nassau, and all the other German watering-places, told us by all means to avoid Mentz during the following week, as a crowd of low people from all parts would be there, to make a great fuss about a printer who had been dead two or three hundred years. The low people did assemble in great crowds: it was computed that at least fifteen thousand strangers had arrived to do honour to the first printer.

The modes in which a large population displays its enthusiasm are pretty much the same throughout the world. If the sentiment which collects men together be very heart-stirring, all the outward manifestations of the sentiment harmonize with its real truth. Thus, processions, and orations, and public dinners, and pageantries, which in themselves are vain and empty, are important when the persons whom they collect together have one common feeling which for the time is all-pervading. We never saw such a popular fervour as prevailed at Mentz at the festival of August 1837. The statue was to be

opened on Monday the 14th; but on the Sunday evening the name of Guttenberg was rife through all the streets. In the morning all Mentz was in motion by six o'clock; and at eight a procession was formed to the Cathedral, which, if it was not much more imposing than some of the processions of trades in London and other cities, was conducted with a quiet precision which evidenced that the people felt they were engaged in a solemn act. The fine old Cathedral was crowded; the Bishop of Mentz performed high Mass; the first Bible printed by Guttenberg was displayed. What a field for reflection was here opened! The first Bible, in connection with the imposing pageantries of Roman Catholicism—the Bible, in great part a sealed book to the body of the people; the service of God in a tongue unknown to the larger number of worshippers; but that first Bible the germ of millions of Bibles that have spread the light of Christianity throughout all the habitable globe! The Mass ended, the procession again advanced to the adjacent square, where the statue was to be opened. Here was erected a vast amphitheatre, where, seated under their respective banners, were deputations from all the great cities of Europe. Amidst salvos of artillery the veil was removed from the statue, and a hymn was sung by a thousand voices. Then came orations;—then dinners — balls — oratorios—boat-races—processions by torchlight. For three days the population of Mentz was kept in a state of high excitement; and the echo of the excitement went through Germany,—and Guttenberg! Guttenberg! was toasted in many a bumper of Rhenish wine amidst this cordial and enthusiastic people.

And, indeed, even in one who could not boast of belonging to the land in which printing was invented, the universality of the mighty effects of this art, when rightly

considered, would produce almost a corresponding enthusiasm. It is difficult to look upon the great changes that have been effected during the last four centuries, and which are still in progress everywhere around us, and not connect them with printing and with its inventor. The castles on the Rhine, under whose ruins we travelled back from Mentz, perished before the powerful combinations of the people of the towns. The petty feudal despots fell, when the burghers had acquired wealth and knowledge. But the progress of despotism upon a larger scale could not have been arrested had the art of Guttenberg not been discovered. The strongholds of military power still frown over the same majestic river. The Rhine has seen its pretty fortresses crumble into decay;—Ehrenbreitstein is more strong than ever. But even Ehrenbreitstein will fall before the power of mind. The Rhine is crowded with steamboats, where the feudal lord once levied tribute upon the frail bark of the fisherman; and the approaches to the Rhine from all Germany, and from France and Belgium, have become a great series of railroads. Such communications will make war a game much more difficult to play; and when mankind are thoroughly civilized, it will never be played again. Seeing, then, what intellect has done and is doing, we may well venerate the memory of Guttenberg of Mentz.

CHAPTER IV.

THE COURT OF BURGUNDY—CAXTON A TRANSLATOR—LITERATURE OF CHIVALRY — FEUDAL TIMES — CAXTON AT THE DUCAL COURT — DID CAXTON PRINT AT BRUGES—EDWARD THE FUGITIVE—THE NEW ART.

THE "most dear" Duke of Burgundy, with whom Caxton was appointed to negotiate in 1464, was Philip, surnamed the Good. He was a wise and peaceful prince, and honourably earned his title. We know not whether Caxton was in immediate attendance upon the court of Philip from the commencement of his mission until the death of the duke in 1467; but the evidence is subsequently clear that he was about the court in some office of trust after the succession to the dukedom of the eldest son of Philip the Count of Charolois. The character of this prince was entirely opposed to that of his father; and he acquired the name of Charles le Téméraire, or the Rash. This fiery prince, whose influence in that warlike age was perhaps greater than the benignant power of his father, was not likely to have looked very favourably upon an envoy from Edward of England: for he was allied by blood on his mother's side to the house of Lancaster, and was consequently opposed to the fortunes of the house of York. The court of Burgundy was the resort of many of the adherents of that unhappy house, who had fled from England after many a vain struggle with the triumphant Edward. These fugitives are described by Comines "as young gentlemen whose fathers had been slain in England,

whom the Duke of Burgundy had generously entertained as his relations of the house of Lancaster." Comines adds, "Some of them were reduced to such extremity of want and poverty before the Duke of Burgundy received them, that no common beggar could have been in greater; I saw one of them, who was Duke of Exeter (but he concealed his name), following the Duke of Burgundy's train bare-foot and bare-legged, begging his bread from door to door: this person was the next of the house of Lancaster; had married King Edward's sister: and being afterwards known, had a small pension allowed him for his subsistence. There were also some of the family of the Somersets, and several others, all of them slain since, in the wars." But the policy of Charles of Burgundy, after his accession to the dukedom, led him to consider the ties of ancient friendship as of far less importance than the strengthening of his hand by an alliance with the successful house of York. Within a year of his succession he married Margaret, sister of Edward IV. Comines says this marriage "was principally to strengthen his alliance against the king of France, otherwise he would never have done it, for the love he bore to the house of Lancaster." The establishment of Margaret as Duchess of Burgundy gave a direction to the fortunes of William Caxton, and was in all likelihood the proximate cause that *he* was our first English printer.

Margaret Plantagenet was married to Charles of Burgundy at the city of Bruges, on the 3rd of July, 1468. We have the distinct evidence of Caxton that he was residing at Bruges some months previous to the marriage; that he had little to do; and that he employed his leisure in literary pursuits. In his 'Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye' it is stated in the title-page, "which said translation and work was begun in Bruges, in the county of

Flanders, the first day of March, the year of the Incarnation a thousand, four hundred, sixty and eight." The prologue begins as follows: "When I remember that every man is bounden by the commandment and counsel of the wise man to eschew sloth and idleness, which is mother and nourisher of vices, and ought to put myself unto virtuous occupation and business, then I, having no great charge or occupation, following the said counsel, took a French book and read therein many strange marvellous histories, wherein I had great pleasure and delight, as well for the novelty of the same, as for the fair language of the French, which was in prose so well and compendiously set and written, methought I understood the sentence and substance of every matter. And for so much as this book was new and late made and drawn into French, and never had seen it in our English tongue, I thought in myself it should be a good business to translate it into our English, to the end that it might be had as well in the royaume of England as in other lands, and also for to pass therewith the time, and thus concluded in myself to begin this said work, and forthwith took pen and ink, and began boldly to run forth, as blind Bayard, in this present work."

Philip de Comines, speaking of the prosperity of the people at the time of the accession of Charles, says, "The subjects of the house of Burgundy lived at that time in great plenty and prosperity, grew proud and wallowed in riches. . . . The expenses and habits both of women and men were great and extravagant; their entertainments and banquets more profuse and splendid than in any other place that I ever saw." The city of Bruges was then the great seat of this wealth and luxury. The Flemish nobles lived here in mansions of striking architecture, some traces of which still remain. The merchants

vied with the nobles in tasteful magnificence. The canals of Bruges were crowded with boats laden with the richest treasures of distant lands. It was commerce that made the inhabitants of Bruges, of Ghent, and the other great Flemish towns so rich and powerful; and the same commerce was the encourager of art, which even at this early period displayed itself amongst a people naturally disposed for its cultivation. Charles the Rash destroyed much of this prosperity by his aptitude for war. But in the onset of his career he fought with all the pomp and graces of the old chivalry, and his court was the seat of such romantic pageantries that John Paston, an Englishman who went over with Margaret of York, writes, "As for the duke's court, as for lords, ladies, and gentlewomen, knights, esquires, and gentlemen, I heard never of none like to it save King Arthur's court." It was here, without doubt, that William Caxton, the yeoman's son of the Weald of Kent, and afterwards the mercer's apprentice of the city of London, acquired that love for the literature of chivalry which he displays on many occasions in his office of translator and printer. Here he made acquaintances that led him to the study of the romance-writers, as for example of a worthy canon of whom he writes, "Oft times I have been excited of the venerable man Messire Henry Bolomyer canon of Lausanne, for to reduce for his pleasure some histories, as well in Latin and in romance as in other fashion written; that is to say, of the right puissant, virtuous, and noble Charles the Great, King of France and Emperor of Rome, son of the great Pepin, and of his princes and barons, as Rowland, Oliver, and other." His zeal for this species of literature left him not in his latest years: for in his translation of 'The Book of the Order of Chivalry,' which was printed by him about 1484, he rises into absolute eloquence in his address at the conclusion of

the volume: "Oh, ye knights of England, where is the custom and usage of noble chivalry that was used in those days? What do ye now, but go to the baynes [baths] and play at dice? And some, not well advised, use not honest and good rule, against all order of knighthood. Leave this, leave it! and read the noble volumes of St. Graal, of Lancelot, of Galaad, of Trystram, of Perse Forest, of Percyval, of Gawayn, and many more: there shall ye see manhood, courtesy, and gentleness. And look in latter days of the noble acts sith the Conquest, as in King Richard days, Cœur de Lion, Edward I., and III. and his noble sons, Sir Robert Knolles, Sir John Hawkwode, Sir John Chandos, and Sir Gueltiare Manny. Read Froissart; and also behold that victorious and noble King Harry V., and the captains under him, his noble brethren the earls of Salisbury, Montagu, and many other, whose names shine gloriously by their virtuous noblesse and acts that they did in the honour of the order of chivalry. Alas, what do ye but sleep and take ease, and are all disordered from chivalry?" Caxton was dazzled, as many others were, with the bravery and the generosity of the chivalric character. He did not see the cruelty and pride, the oppression and injustice, that lurked beneath the glittering armour and the velvet mantle. Yet he was amongst those who first helped to destroy the gross inequality upon which chivalry was founded, by raising up the middle classes to the possession of knowledge. There were scenes transacting at Bruges, even at the very hour when Margaret of York came to give her hand to Charles of Burgundy, that must have shown him what fearful passions were too often the companions of the courage and graces of knighthood.

At the midsummer of 1468 Bruges presented a scene of magnificence that was probably unequalled in those days

of costly display. On the occasion of the approaching marriage, the nobility of Charles's extensive dominions arrived from every quarter. Ambassadors were there from all Christian powers. It looked like an occasion on which men should forget that there was such a thing as war in the world; and when despotism should put on its blandest smile and its most courteous reverence for all orders of men. The Duke of Burgundy anxiously desired the presence of the Count de St. Pôl, the great Constable of France. The constable arrived, surrounded with every pomp that his pride could devise,—with trumpets and banners, with pages on foot and crowds of horsemen, and a naked sword borne before him as the symbol of sovereignty. Charles was irritated beyond measure, and refused to receive the great lord, who from that hour became his deadliest enemy. But there was something more tragic to be enacted in the midst of a population looking only for high triumphs and royal pleasures. One of the chamberlains of the Duke of Burgundy was an illegitimate son of the Lord of Condé; he was very young, of exceeding beauty, and the most agreeable manners. He had fought by the side of the duke at the battle of Montlhéry, and was one of his most especial favourites. The youth, with that ferocious self-abandonment which was not incompatible with the gentlest manners in courts and the noblest honours in camps, committed a murder under circumstances of extraordinary aggravation. He was playing at tennis, and, the fairness of a stroke being doubtful, a bystander was called upon to decide. Deciding against the Bastard of Condé, the young man swore that he would be revenged. The bystander, who was a canon of the church, fled to his home, and the furious youth pursued him. The canon escaped, but his brother encountered the madman. Some victim must be offered up to appease his selfish rage, and

the brother was in his path. The wretched man fell on his knees, and, clasping his hands, begged for mercy. Those uplifted hands were cut off in an instant, and the sword that had been honourably drawn at Montlhéry pierced the breast of an unoffending citizen. Such a murder could not pass unnoticed; and yet the young man's friends did not doubt that he would go unpunished, for he had committed the crime in his father's lordship. Such crimes were often committed with impunity by the great and the powerful; and even the commonalty were unprepared to expect any heavier punishment than a pecuniary recompense to the relations of the murdered man. The duke, however, had taken his determination. The Bastard of Condé was held in arrest at the house of the gatekeeper of the city of Bruges. Charles was solicited on every side for pardon, and even the relations of the deceased, having been moved by suitable presents, supplicated his release; but the duke kept the matter in suspense till Bruges was filled with his subjects from every part of his dominions, and especially with the most powerful of his nobles. At the instant that he was ready to depart to meet the Lady Margaret at the neighbouring port of Ecluse, he commanded that the young man should be taken to the common prison, and the next morning led to execution. Even the magistrate of the city to whom this command was intrusted thought it impossible that the duke should execute one so highly connected, as if he were a common offender. The execution was delayed several hours by the magistrate in the hope that the duke would relent; but no respite came. The youth was carried through the city to the place of execution, amidst the tears of the people, who forgot his crime in his beauty. He was beheaded, and his body divided into four quarters. The Lord of Condé and his adherents left the city vowing

vengeance. The nobles assembled felt themselves outraged by this exercise of absolute power. Even the citizens attributed the stern decree of the duke to his indomitable pride rather than to his love of justice. Such was the prelude to the bridal festivities of the court of Burgundy; of which one who wrote an especial description in Latin says, "The sun never shone upon a more splendid ceremony since the creation of the world."

There can be no doubt that Caxton was in the direct employ of Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy. What he has told us himself of his position in her court is far more interesting than all the conjectures which his biographers have exercised upon the matter. He was in an honourable position, he was treated with confidence, he was grateful. We have already given an extract from the prologue to his 'Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye,' which shows when and under what circumstances he commenced the translation of that work. Remembering his simpleness and unperfectness in the French and English languages (which passage we have already noticed), he continues: "When all these things came before me, after that I had made and written five or six quires, I fell in despair of this work, and purposed no more to have continued therein, and the quires laid apart; and in two years after laboured no more at this work, and was fully in will to have left it. Till on a time it fortuned that the right high, excellent, and right virtuous princess, my right redoubted lady, my Lady Margaret"—and then he gives her a host of titles—"sent for me to speak with her good grace of divers matters, among the which I let her highness have knowledge of the aforesaid beginning of this work; which anon commanded me to shew the said five or six quires to her said grace. And when she had seen them, anon she found defaute [fault] in mine English, which she

commanded me to amend, and moreover commanded me straightly [immediately] to continue and make an end of the residue then not translated. Whose dreadful commandment I durst in no wise disobey, because I am a servant unto her said grace, and receive of her yearly fee, and other many good and great benefits, and also hope many more to receive of her highness; but forthwith went and laboured in the said translation after my simple and poor cunning, all so nigh as I can following mine author, meekly beseeching the bounteous highness of my said lady, that of her benevolence list to accept and take in gree [take kindly] this simple and rude work." The picture which Caxton thus presents to us of his showing his translation with an author's diffidence to the "dreadful" duchess, her criticism of his English, and her very flattering command that in spite of all its faults he should make an end of his work, is as interesting as Froissart's account of his literary recreations with Gaston de Foix:— "The acquaintance of him and of me was because I had brought with me a book, which I made at the contemplation of Winceslaus of Bohemia, Duke of Luxembourg and of Brabant, which work was called 'Meliador,' containing all the songs, ballads, rondeaux, and virelays which the gentle duke had made in this time, which, by imagination I had gathered together: which book the Count of Foix was glad to see. And every night after supper I read therein to him; and while I read there was none durst speak any word, because he would I should be well understood, wherein he took great solace." In both cases the men of letters were received on a free and familiar footing in the courtly circles. In the case of Caxton this was even more honourable to the Lady Margaret, than the welcome which Gaston de Foix gave to the accomplished knight Sir John Froissart. Caxton had no knightly

honours to recommend him; he was a plain merchant: but he was unquestionably a man of modesty and intelligence; he had travelled much; he was familiar with the most popular literature of his day; and he desired to extend the knowledge of it by translations into his native language. It is difficult to say what was his exact employment in the court of the Lady Margaret. He was somewhat too old to partake of its light amusements, to mingle in its gallantries, or even to prompt my lady's fool with some word of wisdom. We have seen that four months before Margaret of York came to Bruges he had "no great charge or occupation," and he undertook the translation of a considerable work "for to pass therewith the time." It has, however, been maintained of late years that Caxton was at this very time a printer. The question is a curious one, and we may bestow a little space upon its examination.

Mr. Hallam, in his 'Literature of Europe,' noticing the progress of printing, says that several books were printed in Paris in 1470 and 1471, adding, "But there seem to be unquestionable proofs that a still earlier specimen of typography is due to an English printer, the famous Caxton. His 'Recueil des Histoires de Troye' appears to have been printed during the life of Philip, Duke of Burgundy, and consequently before June 15, 1467. The place of publication, certainly within the duke's dominions, has not been conjectured. It is, therefore, by several years the earliest printed book in the French language. A Latin speech by Russell, ambassador of Edward IV. to Charles of Burgundy, in 1469, is the next publication of Caxton. This was also printed in the Low Countries." The authority upon which the learned and accomplished historian of the Middle Ages relies for this statement is that of Mr. Dibdin, in his 'Typographical

Antiquities.' The French edition of the 'Recueil des Histoires de Troye' bears no printer's name, date, or place. It purports to have been composed by Raoul le Fevre, chaplain to Duke Philip de Bourgoyne, in the year 1464. The evidence that this book was printed by Caxton was summed up by Mr. Bryant, and communicated by him to Mr. Herbert, the first editor of Ames's 'Typographical Antiquities.' The Rev. Mr. Dibdin, the second editor, says that these memoranda of Mr. Bryant's "clearly prove it to have been the production of Caxton." The argument rests upon these points: that the French and English editions of Le Fevre's work have an exact conformity and likeness throughout, for not only the page itself, but the number of lines in a page, the length, breadth, and intervals of the lines, are alike in both, and the letters, great and small, are of the same magnitude. It corresponds too with 'The Game of the Chess,' printed by Caxton in England in 1474. "These considerations," says Mr. Bryant, "settle who the printer was." We venture to doubt this. Mr. Bryant has himself shown how this resemblance might be produced between books printed by Caxton, and books supposed to be printed by him, without Caxton being the actual printer. "Mentz was taken by the Duke of Saxony in the year 1462, and most of the artificers employed by John Fust, the great inventor, were dispersed abroad. I make no doubt but Caxton, who was at no great distance from Mentz, took this opportunity of making himself a master of the mystery, which he had been at much trouble and expense to obtain. This I imagine he effected by taking into pay some of Fust's servants, and settling them for a time at Cologne. Of this number probably were Pinson and Rood, Mechlin, Lettou, and Wynkyn de Worde. With the help of some of these, he printed the book [which

Wynkyn de Worde says Caxton printed] 'Bartholomeus de Prop. Rerum,' and the translation of the 'Recueil;' and probably many other books, which, being either in French or Latin, were not vendible in our country, and consequently no copies are extant here. Of all the books he printed in England, I do not remember above one in a foreign language." The calamity which drove the printers of Mentz from their homes, the storming of the city by Adolphus of Nassau, would naturally disperse their types, as well as break up their workshops. The resemblance between the doubtful books, and books undoubtedly printed by Caxton, was the resemblance of types cast in the same matrices; the spaces between the lines, as well as the form and magnitude of the letters, were produced by the letters being cast in the same mould. The resemblance would have been equally produced whether the types were used by one and the same printer, or by two printers. The typographical antiquarians say that the same types are used in the French and English works of Le Fevre and in Caxton's 'Game of Chess;' and Mr. Herbert adds, that the types are the same as those used by Fust and Schoeffer, the partners of Guttenberg. If the resemblance of types were sufficient to determine the printer of two or more books, then Fust and Schoeffer ought to be called the printers of the French 'Recueil,' as well as of the English translation which Caxton says he printed at Cologne. There can be little doubt that, when Caxton went to Cologne to be a printer in 1471, he became possessed of the types and matrices with which he printed his translation of Le Fevre, and subsequently brought to England to print his 'Game of Chess.' Another printer might have preceded him in their possession, and might have received them direct from Fust and Schoeffer. When the art ceased to be a

mystery, a profit might arise from selling the types or multiplying the matrices. Upon these considerations we wholly demur to the assertion, resting solely upon this resemblance, that Caxton was a printer during the life of Philip le Bon. The belief is entirely opposed to his own statement, that shortly after the death of this prince he was completely at leisure, and set about a translation to while away his time. To be a printer in those days was a mighty undertaking. We shall subsequently see that he declares that he had practised and learnt the art at great charge and expense. It is wholly unlikely, also, that so gossiping a man, who makes a familiar friend of his readers, telling them of almost every circumstance that led to the printing of every book, that he in his translation should not have said one word of being the printer of the original work. The other book, the Latin speech by Russell, in 1469, which has been called the second publication of Caxton, is attributed to him absolutely upon no other grounds than the same resemblance of type. Assuredly we cannot receive the fact of resemblance as conclusive of Caxton being the printer either in this case or in that of the preceding. He tells us that in 1470 he was a servant receiving yearly fee from the Duchess of Burgundy, and completed an extensive work at her command, which he simply began "to eschew sloth and idleness," and to put himself "unto virtuous occupation and business." When he did fairly become a printer, he left sufficiently clear indications of his habitual industry. We have no question how he filled up his time when the press at Westminster was at work.

It was in the autumn of 1470, when Master William Caxton would appear to have been busily labouring in some silent turret of the palace at Bruges, upon his translation of Raoul le Fevre, that an event occurred, of all

others the most calculated to spread consternation in the court of Burgundy, and to make the bold duke feel that in abandoning his family allianee with the house of Lancaster he had not done the politic thing which he anticipated. Edward IV., who had sat for some years with tolerable quiet upon the English throne, to whieh he had fought his way in many a battle-field with prodigious bravery, suddenly arrived at Bruges, in the October of 1470, a discrowned fugitive. He made his escape from the overwhelming inroad of the power of Warwick, "attended," says Comines, "by seven or eight hundred men without any clothes but what they were to have fought in, no money in their pockets, and not one in twenty of them knew whither they were going." He, the most beautiful man of the time, as Comines deseribes him,—who for twelve or thirteen years of prosperity had lived a life of the most luxurious gratification,—he arrived at Bruges, after being chased by privateers, and with difficulty rescued from their hands, so poor that he "was forced to give the master of the ship for his passage a gown lined with martens." At Bruges, then, did this fugitive remain nearly five months, when he again leaped into his throne, in the following April, with a triumphant boldness which has only one parallel in modern history,—that of the mareh of Napoleon from Elba. In May, 1471, he addressed a letter in French to the nobles and burgomasters of Bruges, thanking them for the courtesy and hospitality he had received from them during his exile. Edward was of a sanguine temper; and, however depressed in fortune, was not likely, during those five months of humiliation, to have doubted that in good time he should regain the throne. He was of an easy and communicative disposition; and would naturally eonfer with his sister and her confidential servants upon his plans and prospects. Comines says, "King Edward told me

that, in all the battles which he had gained, his way was, when the victory was on his side, to mount on horseback, and cry out to save the common soldiers, and put the gentry to the sword." We mention this to show that he was not indisposed to talk of himself and his doings with those whom he met during his exile. It is more than probable, then, that he had the same sort of free communication with his countryman Caxton. It was at this period that the progress of the art of printing must have been a subject of universal interest. The merchants of Bruges had commercial intercourse with all the countries of Europe; and they would naturally bring to the court of Burgundy some specimens of that art which was already beginning to create a new description of commerce. From Mentz, Bamberg, Cologne, Strasburg, and Augsburg they would bring some of the Latin and German Bibles which, from 1461 to 1470, had issued from the presses of those cities. The presses of Italy, and especially of Rome, of Venice, and of Milan, had, during the same period, sent forth books, and more particularly classical works, in great abundance. The art had made such rapid progress in Italy, that in the first edition of St. Jerome's Epistles, printed in 1468, the Bishop of Aleria thus addresses Pope Paul II.: "It was reserved for the times of your holiness for the Christian world to be blessed with the immense advantages resulting from the art of printing; by means of which, and with a little money, the poorest person may collect together a few books. It is a small testimony of the glory of your holiness, that the volumes which formerly scarcely an hundred golden crowns would purchase may now be procured for twenty and less, and these well-written and authentic ones." It is pretty clear that Caxton, when he began his translation of the 'Histories of Troy,' had some larger circulation in view than could be

obtained by the medium of transcription: "I thought in myself it should be a good business to translate it into our English, to the end that it might be had as well in the royaume of England as in other lands." It is also probable that he was moving about in search of the best mode of printing it; for he says, at the end of the second book of the 'Recueil,' "And for as much as I suppose the said two books be not had before this time in our English language, therefore I had the better will to accomplish the said work; which work was begun in Bruges, and continued in Gaunt [Ghent], and finished in Cologne, in time of the troublous world, and of the great divisions being and reigning as well in the royaumes of England and France as in all other places universally through the world, that is to wit, the year of our Lord one thousand, four hundred, and seventy-one." But he further says, with reference to his translation of the third book, which he doubted about doing, "because that I have now good leisure, being in Cologne, and have none other thing to do at this time in eschewing of idleness, mother of all vices, I have deliberated in myself of the contemplation of my said redoubted lady, to take this labour in hand." We shall presently see when Caxton became, or at any rate avowed himself to have become, a printer. Up to this point we see him only as a translator, a man of leisure, and not one learning a new and difficult craft. But we see him moving about from Bruges to Ghent, from Ghent to Cologne, without any distinct or specified object. There can be little doubt, we believe, that he was endeavouring to make himself acquainted with the new art, still in great measure a secret art, the masters of which required to be approached with considerable caution. That the presence of Edward IV. in Flanders, during a period when Caxton might readily have had access to his person, might have

led him to believe that the time would come when, under the patronage of the restored prince, he might carry the art to London, is not an improbable conjecture. Amongst the companions of Edward's exile was his brother-in-law, the celebrated Lord Rivers. This brave and accomplished young nobleman subsequently translated a book called 'The Dictes and Sayings of Philosophers,' which Caxton printed at Westminster, in 1477. The printer has added an appendix to this translation, from which we collect that the noble author and his literary printer were upon terms of mutual confidence and regard: "At such time as he had accomplished this said work, it liked him to send it to me in certain quires to oversee. . . . . And so afterward I came unto my said lord, and told him how I had read and seen his book, and that he had done a meritorious deed in the labour of the translation thereof. . . . . Then my said lord desired me to oversee it, and, where as I should find fault, to correct it, wherein I answered unto his lordship that I could not amend it. . . . . Notwithstanding he willed me to oversee it." Earl Rivers, then Lord Scales, was also at Bruges upon the occasion of the Lady Margaret's marriage. Employed, therefore, by the the Duchess of Burgundy, the sister of Edward IV., and honoured with the confidence of Earl Rivers, his brother-in-law, we may reasonably believe that the presence of Edward at Bruges in 1470–71 might have had some influence upon the determination of Caxton to learn and practise the new art of printing, and to carry it into England, if the "troublous times" could afford him occasion. We have distinct evidence that Edward IV. gave a marked encouragement to the labours of Caxton as a translator, in a book printed by him without any date, 'The Life of Jason,' written, as were the 'Histories of Troy,' by Raoul le Fevre, in which Caxton says in his prologue, "For as much as late by the com-

mandment of the right high and noble princess my Lady Margaret, &c., I translated a book out of French in English, named 'Recueil,' &c. . . . . Therefore, under the protection and sufferance of the most high, puissant, and Christian king, my most dread natural liege, Lord Edward, &c., I intend to translate the said book of the 'Histories of Jason.'" The expression "for as much as late by the commandment," &c., brings the date of the 'Histories of Jason' close to that of the 'Histories of Troy,' and points out the probability that the protection and sufferance of Edward was afforded to Caxton when the king was a fugitive at the court of Burgundy. In the 'Issues of the Exchequer' there is the following entry of a payment on the 15th of June, in the 19th of Edward IV.: "To William Caxton, in money paid to his own hands, in discharge of twenty pounds which the lord the king commanded to be paid to the same William for certain causes and matters performed by him for the said lord the king." This is eight years after the period of Edward's exile, being in 1479. But as the productions of Caxton's press were very prolific at this time, we may believe that the payment of such a large sum for certain causes and matters performed for the king was in some degree connected with his labours in the introduction of printing into England,—a payment not improbably postponed for obligations incurred, and promises granted, at an earlier period.

CHAPTER V.

RAPIDITY OF PRINTING—WHO THE FIRST ENGLISH PRINTER—CAXTON THE FIRST ENGLISH PRINTER—FIRST ENGLISH PRINTED BOOK—DIFFICULTIES OF THE FIRST PRINTERS—ANCIENT BOOKBINDING—THE PRINTER A PUBLISHER—CONDITIONS OF CHEAPNESS IN BOOKS.

T the end of the third book of Caxton's translation of the 'Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye,' which we have so often quoted, is the following most curious passage: "Thus end I this book, which I have translated after mine author, as nigh as God hath given me cunning, to whom be given the laud and praises. And for as much as in the writing of the same my pen is worn, mine hand weary and not stedfast, mine eyen dimmed with overmuch looking on the white paper, and my courage not so prone and ready to labour as it hath been, and that age creepeth on me daily and feebleth all the body; and also because I have promised to divers gentlemen and to my friends to address to them as hastily as I might this said book, therefore I have practised and learned, at my great charge and dispense [expense], to ordain this said book in print, after the manner and form as you may here see; and is not written with pen and ink as other books are, to the end that every man may have them at once. For all the books of this story named the 'Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye,' thus imprinted as ye here see, were begun in one day, and also finished in one day. Which book I presented to my said redoubted lady as afore is said, and

she hath well accepted it and largely rewarded me." It was customary for the first printers, which is not according to the belief that they wanted to palm their printed books off as manuscripts, to state that they were not drawn or written with a pen and ink. Udalricus Gallus, who printed at Rome about 1470, says, "I, Udalricus Gallus, without pen or pencil have imprinted this book." But he further says of himself at the end of one of his books, "I printed thus much in a day; it is not written in a year." It has been held that Caxton uses a purely marvellous and hyperbolical mode of expression, when he says, "All the books of this story, thus imprinted as ye here see, were begun in one day and finished in one day." Dr. Dibdin inquires what Caxton meant "by saying that the book was begun and finished in one day? Did he wish his countrymen to believe that the translation of Le Fevre's book was absolutely printed in twenty-four hours?" Dr. Dibdin truly holds the thing to be impracticable, because the book consisted of seven hundred and seventy-eight folio pages. Such feats have been done with the large capital and division of labour of modern times; but to begin and finish such a book in one day in the fifteenth century was certainly an impossibility. We venture to think that Caxton says nothing of the sort. He puts with great force and justice the chief advantages of printing,—the rapidity with which many copies could be produced at once. He promised, he says, to divers gentlemen and friends to address to them as hastily as he might this book. There were many who wanted the book. The transcribers could not supply their wants. He could not multiply copies himself with his pen, for his hand was weary and his eyes dim. He learned, therefore, to ordain the book in print, to the end that all his friends might have the books at the same time,—that

every man might have them at once; and to explain this, he says, all the books thus imprinted were begun in one day. If he printed a hundred copies, each of the hundred copies was begun at the same time; a hundred sheets, each sheet forming a portion of each copy, were printed off in one day,—and in the same way were they also finished in one day. He does not say, as Dr. Dibdin interprets the passage, that *the book* was begun and finished in one day,—one and the same day,—but that *all* the books were begun on one day, and all the books were finished on another day. His expression is not very clear, but his meaning is quite apparent. This was the end that he sought to obtain at great charge and expense; this is the end which has been more and more obtained at every step forward in the art of printing,—the rapid multiplication of copies, so that all men may have them at once.

The place where Caxton learned the art of printing, and the persons of whom he first learned it, are not shown in any of his voluminous prologues and prefaces. But an extraordinary statement was published in the year 1664, by a person of the name of Richard Atkyns, who sought to prove that printing was a royal prerogative, because, as he says, the art was first brought into England at the cost of the crown. His narrative is held to be altogether a fiction; for the document upon which he rests it was never forthcoming, and no person has ever testified to the knowledge of it, except Richard Atkyns himself, who laboured hard to obtain a patent from the crown for the sole printing of law-books, upon the ground which he attempts to take of the crown having brought printing into England. "Thomas Bourchier, Archbishop of Canterbury, moved the then king, Henry VI., to use all possible means for procuring a printing-mould, for so

it was then called, to be brought into this kingdom. The king, a good man, and much given to works of this nature, readily hearkened to the motion; and taking private advice how to effect this design, concluded it could not be brought about without great secrecy, and a considerable sum of money given to such person or persons as would draw off some of the workmen from Haarlem in Holland, where John Guttenberg had newly invented it, and was himself personally at work. It was resolved that less than one thousand marks would not produce the desired effect: towards which sum the said archbishop presented the king with three hundred marks. The money being now prepared, the management of the design was committed to Mr. Robert Turnour, who then was keeper of the robes to the king, and a person most in favour with him of any of his condition. Mr. Turnour took to his assistance Mr. Caxton, a citizen of good abilities, who, trading much into Holland, might be a creditable pretence, as well for his going as staying in the Low Countries. Mr. Turnour was in disguise, his beard and hair shaven quite off, but Mr. Caxton appeared known and public. They having received the sum of one thousand marks, went first to Amsterdam, then to Leyden, not daring to enter Haarlem itself; for the town was very jealous, having imprisoned and apprehended divers persons, who came from other parts for the same purpose. They stayed till they had spent the whole one thousand marks in gifts and expenses. So as the king was fain to send five hundred marks more, Mr. Turnour having written to the king that he had almost done his work, a bargain, as he said, being struck between him and two Hollanders for bringing off one of the workmen, who should sufficiently discover and teach the new art. At last, with much ado, they got off one of the under

workmen, whose name was Frederick Corsells, or rather Corsellis; who late one night stole from his fellows in disguise, into a vessel prepared before for that purpose; and so the wind, favouring the design, brought him safe to London. It was not thought so prudent to set him on work at London, but by the archbishop's means, who had been Vice-chancellor and afterwards Chancellor of the University of Oxon, Corsellis was carried with a guard to Oxon, which constantly watched to prevent Corsellis from any possible escape, till he had made good his promise, in teaching how to print. So that at Oxford printing was first set up in England." This is certainly an extraordinary story, and one which upon the face of it has traces of inconsistency, if not of imposture. Richard Atkyns says that a certain worthy person "did present me with a copy of a record and manuscript in Lambeth House, heretofore in his custody, belonging to the See, and not to any particular Archbishop of Canterbury. The substance whereof was this; though I hope, for public satisfaction, the record itself in its due time will appear." The record itself did never appear, and, though diligently sought for, could never be found. But Atkyns further stated that the same most worthy person who gave him the copy of the record, trusted him with a book "printed at Oxon, A.D. 1468, which was three years before any of the recited authors [Stow and others] would allow it [printing] to be in England." He does not mention the book; but there is such a book, and it is entitled 'Expositio Sancti Ieronimi in Simbolum, ad Papam Laurentiam;' and at the end, 'Explicit Expositio, &c., Impressa Oxonie, et finita Anno Dom. MCCCCLXVIII, xvii die Decembris.' Anthony Wood repeats the story of Atkyns in his 'History of the University of Oxford;' and he adds, "And thus the mystery of printing appeared ten years

sooner in the University of Oxford than at any other place in Europe, Haarlem and Mentz excepted. Not long after there were presses set up in Westminister, St. Albans, Worcester, and other monasteries of note. After this manner printing was introduced into England, by the care of Archbishop Bourchier, in the year of Christ 1464, and the third of King Edward IV." Wood's version of the story makes it a little, a very little, more credible, for it brings it nearer to the time when the newly-discovered art of printing might have attracted some attention in England. But even in 1464 there were, with scarcely more than one exception, no printed books known in Europe but the first productions of the press at Mentz. The story of Caxton going to Haarlem in the time of Henry the Sixth, that is, in some year previous to 1461, must altogether be a fabrication, or a mistake. The accounts that would ascribe the invention of printing to Laurence Coster, of Haarlem, set up a legendary story that John Fust, or John Guttenberg (not the real Guttenberg, but an elder brother), stole the invention from Coster and carried it to Mentz in 1442. If Caxton, therefore, went to Haarlem in Holland, with a companion, in disguise, to learn the art of printing, he must have gone there before 1442; for the story holds that Coster was not only robbed of his secret, but of his types, and gave up printing, in despair to his more fortunate spoiler. Bourchier was not Archbishop of Canterbury till 1454. We may be sure, therefore, that, wherever Caxton went to learn the art of printing at an earlier period than is generally supposed, he did not go to Haarlem in Holland. Substitute Mentz for Haarlem, and Atkyns's story is more consistent. It is by no means improbable that Henry the Sixth and Cardinal Bourchier might have seen the magnificent Latin Bible, called the Mazarine Bible, which was printed by Gutten-

berg, Schoeffer, and Fust, and is held to have appeared about 1455. Of this noble book Mr. Hallam says, "It is a very striking circumstance, that the high-minded inventors of this great art tried at the very outset so bold a flight as the printing an entire Bible, and executed it with astonishing success. It was Minerva leaping on earth in her divine strength and radiant armour, ready at the moment of her nativity to subdue and destroy her enemies." The king and the archbishop might have desired that England should learn the art of executing so splendid a work as the first Bible. At that period we know that Caxton was residing abroad, and he was a fit person to be selected for such a commission. But kings at that day were scarcely better supplied with money than their subjects; and if Henry the Sixth had sent to Mr. Robert Turnour or Mr. William Caxton seven hundred marks at one time and five hundred at another, the gifts must have been registered with all due formality. We have the Exchequer registers of Henry the Sixth and his great rival; and although we learn that Edward the Fourth gave Caxton twenty pounds, neither his name nor that of Mr. Turnour, nor even of the archbishop, is associated with any bounty of Henry the Sixth. We may, therefore, safely conclude, with Dr. Conyers Middleton, with regard to all this story, that "Mr. Atkyns, a bold vain man, might be the inventor of it, having an interest in imposing upon the world, to confirm his argument that printing was of the prerogative royal, in opposition to the stationers; against whom he was engaged in expensive lawsuits, in defence of the king's patents, under which he claimed some exclusive powers of printing." The date of 1468 on the Oxford book is reasonably concluded to have been a typographical error. There are niceties in the printing of that book which did not belong to the earliest stages of the art; and

the same type and manner of printing are seen in Oxford books printed immediately after 1478. The probability therefore is, that an X was omitted in the Roman numerals.

We could scarcely avoid detailing this story, apocryphal as the whole matter is upon the face of it, because the claims of Oxford to the honour of the first printing-press were once the subject of a fierce controversy. The honest antiquarian Oldys complains most bitterly of Richard Atkyns, "How unwarrantably he robbed Master Caxton of the honour, wherewith he had long been, by the suffrage of all learned men, undeniably invested, of first introducing and practising this most scientifical invention among us." But had this story been true, Caxton would not have been robbed of his glory. He would still have been what Leland, writing within half a century of his death, calls him, "Angliæ Prototypographus"—the first printer of England. For it is not the man who is the accidental instrument of introducing a great invention, and then pursues it no further, who is to have the fame of its promulgation. It is he who by patient and assiduous labour acquires the mastery of a new principle, sees afar off the high objects to which it may be applied, carries out its details with persevering courage, is not deterred by failure nor satisfied with partial success, works for a great purpose through long years of anxiety, is careless of honours or rewards, and finally does accomplish all and much more than he proposed, planting the tree, training it, rejoicing in its good fruit,—he it is that is the real first introducer and practiser of a great scientific invention, even though some one may have preceded him in some similar attempt—an experiment, but not a perfect work. We may well believe that, for some ten years of his residence abroad, the knowledge that a new art was discovered, promising such

mighty results as that of printing, must have excited the deepest interest in the mind of Caxton. He says himself, in his continuation of the Polychronicon, "About this time [1455] the craft of imprinting was first found in Mogunce in Almayne." During his residence at the court of Burgundy he would see the art multiplying around him. Italy, where it most extensively flourished before 1470, was too distant for his personal inspection. Bamberg, Augsburg, and Strasburg brought it nearer to him. But Cologne, where Conrad Winters set up a press about 1470, was very near at hand. A few days' journey would place him within the walls of the holy city of the Rhine. Cologne, we have no doubt, fixed the employment of the remainder of his life; and made the London mercer, whose name, like the names of many other good and respectable men, would have held no place in the memory of the world but for the art he learnt in his latter years,—Cologne rendered the name of Caxton a bright and venerable name;—a name that even his countrymen, who are accustomed chiefly to raise columns and statues to the warlike defenders of their country, will one day honour amongst the heroes who have most successfully cultivated the arts of peace, and by high talent and patient labour have rendered it impossible that mankind should not steadily advance in the acquisition of knowledge and virtue, and in the consequent amelioration of the lot of every member of the family of mankind, at some period, present or remote.

The provost of the city of Mentz, on the occasion of the festival of Guttenberg, published an address full of German enthusiasm, at which we may be apt to smile, but which breathes a spirit of reverence for the higher concerns of our being which we might profitably engraft upon the practical good sense on which we pride ourselves. He

says, "If the mortal who invented that method of fixing the fugitive sounds of words which we call the alphabet has operated upon mankind like a divinity, so also has Guttenberg's genius brought together the once isolated inquirers, teachers, and learners—all the scattered and divided efforts for extending God's kingdom over the whole civilized earth—as though beneath one temple. Guttenberg's invention, not a lucky accident, but the golden fruit of a well-considered idea—an invention made with a perfect consciousness of its end—has above all other causes, for more than four centuries, urged forward and established the dominion of science: and what is of the most importance, has immeasurably advanced the mental formation and education of the people. This invention, a true intellectual sun, has mounted above the horizon, first of the European Christians, and then of the people of other climes and other faiths to an ever-enduring morning. It has made the return of barbarism, the isolation of mankind, the reign of darkness, impossible for all future times. It has established a public opinion, a court of moral judicature common to all civilized nations, whatever natural divisions may separate them, as much as for the provinces of one and the same state. In a word, it has formed fellow labourers at the never-resting loom of Christian European civilization in every quarter of the world, in almost every island of the ocean."

Filled with some such strong belief, although perhaps a vague belief, of the blessings which printing might bestow upon his own country, we may view William Caxton proceeding, about the end of 1470, to the city of Cologne, resolved to acquire the art of which he had seen some of the effects, without stint of labour or expense. That he was an apt and diligent scholar his after works abundantly prove.

The first book printed in the English language, the 'Recueil of the Histories of Troy,' which we have so often noticed, does not bear upon the face of it when and where it was printed. That it was printed by Caxton we can have no doubt, because he says, "I have practised and learned, at my great charge and dispense, to ordain this said book in print." He tells us, too, in the title-page, that the *translation* was finished at Cologne, in September, 1471. That Caxton printed at Cologne we have tolerably clear evidence. There is a most curious book of Natural History, originally written in Latin by Bartholomew Glanvill, a Franciscan friar of the fourteenth century, commonly known as Bartholomæus. A translation of this book, which is called 'De Proprietatibus Rerum,' was printed in England by Wynkyn de Worde, who was an assistant to Caxton in his printing-office at Westminster, and there succeeded to him. In some quaint stanzas which occur in this edition, and which appear to be written either by or in the name of the printer, are these lines, which we copy, in the first instance, exactly following the orthography and non-punctuation of the original :—

> "And also of your charyte call to remembraunce
> The soule of William Caxton first prȳter of this boke
> Jn laten tonge at Coleyn hȳself to auaũce
> That euery well disposyd man may theron loke."

That we are asked to call to remembrance the soul of William Caxton is perfectly clear; but how are we to read the subsequent members of the sentence? The most obvious meaning appears to be that William Caxton was the first printer of this book in the Latin tongue; that he printed it at Cologne; and that his object in printing it was to advance or profit himself, in addition to his desire that every well-disposed man might look upon it. But there is another interpretation of these words, which is

certainly not a forced one: that William Caxton was the first printer of this book, the English book, and that the object of his printing it was to advance himself in the Latin tongue at Cologne. "This book" would appear then to be, this English book, this same book. If a copy of this book, whether in Latin or English, printed at Cologne at so early a period, could be found, the question would be set at rest. There is a Latin edition printed at Cologne, in 1481, by John Koelhoff; and there is an edition in Latin without date or place. The first English edition known is that by Wynkyn de Worde, and that translation was made much earlier than the time of Caxton, by John de Trevisa. Caxton could scarcely have been said to have desired to have advanced himself in the Latin tongue, unless he had translated the book as well as printed it. The mere fact of superintending workmen who set up the types in Latin would have done little to advance his knowledge of the language. We believe, therefore, that we must receive the obscure lines of Wynkyn de Worde as evidence that Caxton did print at Cologne, and that he undertook the Latin edition of Bartholomæus as a commercial speculation, "himself to advance," or profit.

And, indeed, when we look at the state of England after the return of Edward IV. from his exile,—the "great divisions" of which Caxton himself speaks,—we may consider that he acted with discretion in conducting his first printing operations in a German city. It must be also borne in mind that this was by far the readiest mode to obtain a competent knowledge in the new art. Had he come over to England with types and presses, and even with the most skilful workmen, the probability is that the man of letters who, two or three years before, had little or nothing to do in his attendance upon the Burgundian court, would have ill succeeded in so complicated

and difficult a commercial enterprise. Lambinet, a French bibliographical writer, tells us that Melchior de Stamham, wishing to establish a printing-office at Augsburg, engaged a skilful workman of the same town, of the name of Sauerloch. He employed a whole year in making the necessary preparations for his office. He bought five presses, of the materials of which he constructed five other presses. He cast pewter types, and, having spent a large sum, seven hundred and two florins, in establishing his office, began working in 1473. He died before he had completed one book: heartbroken, probably, at the amount of capital he had sunk; for his unfinished book was sold off at a mere trifle, and his office broken up. This statement, which rests upon some ancient testimony, shows us something of the difficulties which had to be encountered by the early printers. They had to do everything for themselves; to construct the materials of their art, types, presses, and every other instrument and appliance. When Caxton began to print at Cologne, he probably had the means of obtaining a set of moulds from some previous printer,—what are called strikes from the punches that form the original matrices. The writers upon typography seem to assume the necessity of every one of the old printers cutting his punches anew, and shaping his letters according to his own notions of proportionate beauty. That the great masters of their art, the first inventors, the Italian printers, the Alduses, the Stephenses, pursued this course is perfectly clear. But when printing ceased to be a mystery, about 1462, it is more than probable that those who tried to set up a press, especially in Germany, either bought a few types of the more established printers, or obtained a readier means of casting types than that of cutting new punches,—a difficult and expensive operation. Thus we believe the attempts to assign a book without a

printer's name to some printer whose types that book resembles can be little relied upon. Caxton's types are held to be like the type of this printer and the type of that; and it is said that he copied the types, with the objection added that he did not copy the best models. What should have prevented him buying the types from the continent, as every English printer did until the middle of the last century? or at any rate what should have prevented him buying copies of the moulds which other printers were using? The bas-relief upon Thorwaldsen's statue of Guttenberg exhibits the first printer examining a matrix. But all the difficulties in the formation of the first matrix overcome, we may readily see that, at every stage, the art of making fusile types would become easier and simpler, till at length the division of labour should be perfectly applied to type-making, and the mere casting of a letter, as each letter is cast singly, exhibit one of the most rapid and beautiful pieces of handiwork that the arts can show.

But the type obtained, Caxton would still have much to do before his office was furnished. We have seen how Melchior of Augsburg set about getting his presses: "He bought of John Schuesseler five presses, which cost him seventy-three Rhenish florins: he constructed with these materials five other smaller presses." To those who know what a well-adjusted machine the commonest printing-press now in use is, it is not easy at first to conceive what is meant by saying that Melchior bought five presses, and made five other presses out of the materials. The solution is this: in all probability this printer of Augsburg bought five old wine-presses, and, using the screws, cut them down and adapted them to the special purpose for which he designed them. The earliest printing-press was nothing more than a common screw-press,—such as a cheese-press,

or a napkin-press,—with a contrivance for running the *form* of types under the screw after the *form* was inked. It is evident that this mode of obtaining an impression must have been very laborious and very slow. As the screw must have come down upon the types with a dead pull,—that is, as the table upon which the types were placed was solid and unyielding,—great care must have been required to prevent the pressure being so hard as to injure the face of the letters.

A famous printer, Jodocus Badius Ascensianus, has exhibited his press in the title-page of a book printed by him in 1498. Up to the middle of the last century this rude press was in use in England; although the press of an ingenious Dutch mechanic, Blaew,—in which the pressure was rapidly communicated from the screw to the types, and all the parts of the press were yielding so as to produce a sharp but not a crushing impression,—was gradually superseding it. The early printers manufactured their own ink, so that Caxton had to learn the art of ink-making. The ink was applied to the types by balls, or dabbers, such as one of the men holds who is working the press of Badius. Such dabbers were universally used in printing forty years ago. As the ancient weaver was expected to make his own loom, so, even this short time since, the division of labour was so imperfectly applied to printing, that the pressman was expected to make his own balls. A very rude and nasty process this was. The sheepskins, called pelts, were prepared in the printing-office, where the wool with which they were stuffed was also carded; and these balls, thus manufactured by a man whose general work was entirely of a different nature, required the expenditure of at least half an hour's labour every day in a very disagreeable operation, by which they were kept soft.

There were many other little nicetiès in the home construction of the materials for printing which Caxton would necessarily have to learn. But in the earlier stages of an art requiring such nice arrangement, both in the departments of the compositor, or setter-up of the type, and of the pressman, it is quite clear that many things which,

Ancient Press.

by the habit of four centuries, have become familiar and easy in a printing-office, would be exceedingly difficult to be acquired by the first printers. Rapidity in the work was probably out of the question. Accidents must constantly have occurred in wedging up the single letters tightly in pages and sheets; and when one looks at the

regularity of the inking of these old books, and the beautiful accuracy with which the line on one side of a page falls on the corresponding line on the other side (called by printers "register"), we may be sure that with very imperfect mechanical means an amount of care was taken in working off the sheets which would appear ludicrous to a modern pressman. The higher operation of a printing-office, which consists in reading the proofs, must have been in the first instance full of embarrassment and difficulty. A scholar was doubtless employed to test the accuracy of the proofs; probably some one who had been previously employed to overlook the labours of the transcribers. Fierce must have been the indignation of such a one during a course of painful experience, when he found one letter presented for another, letters and even syllables and words omitted, letters topsy-turvy, and even actual substitutions of one word for another. These are almost unavoidable consequences of the mechanical operation of arranging movable types, so entirely different from the work of the transcriber. The corrector of the press would not understand this; and his life would not be a pleasant one. Caxton was no doubt the corrector of his own press; and well for him it was that he brought to his task the patience, industry, and good temper which are manifest in his writings.

But the ancient printer had something more to do before his manufacture was complete. He was a bookbinder as well as a printer. The ancient books, manuscript as well as printed, were wonderful specimens of patient labour. The board, literally a wooden board, between which the leaves were fastened, was as thick as the panel of a door. This was covered with leather, sometimes embossed with the most ingenious devices. There were large brass nails, with ornamented heads, on the outside of this cover, with

magnificent corners to the lids. In addition, there were clasps. The back was rendered solid with paste and glue, so as to last for centuries. Erasmus says of such a book, "As for Thomas Aquinas's Secunda Secundæ, no man can carry it about, much less get it into his head." An ancient woodcut shows us the binder hammering at the leaves to make them flat, and a lad sewing the leaves in a frame very like that still in use. Above are the books flying in the air in all their solid glory.

But the most difficult labour of the ancient printer, and that which would necessarily constitute the great distinction between one printer and another, was yet to come. He had to sell his books when he had manufactured them, for there was no division of the labour of publisher and printer in those days. His success would of course much depend upon the quality of his books; upon their adaptation to the nature of the demand for books; upon their accuracy; upon their approach to the beauty of the old manuscripts. But he had to incur the risk common to all copying processes, whether the thing produced be a medal or a book, of expending a large certain sum before a single copy could be produced. The process of printing, compared with that of writing, is a cheap process as ordinarily conducted; but the condition of cheapness is this,—that a sufficient number of copies of any particular book may be reckoned upon as saleable, so as to render the proportion of the first expense upon a single copy inconsiderable. If it were required even at the present time to print a single copy, or even three or four copies only, of any literary work, the cost of printing would be greater than the cost of transcribing. It is when hundreds, and especially thousands, of the same work are demanded, that the great value of the printing-press in making knowledge cheap is particularly shown. It is probable that the first printers

did not take off more than two or three hundred, if so many, of their works; and, therefore, the earliest printed books must have been still dear, on account of the limited number of their readers. Caxton, as it appears by a passage in one of his books, was a cautious printer; and required something like an assurance that he should sell enough of any particular book to repay the cost of producing it. In his 'Legend of Saints' he says, "I have submysed [submitted] myself to translate into English the 'Legend of Saints,' called 'Legenda aurea' in Latin; and William, Earl of Arundel, desired me—and promised to take a reasonable quantity of them—and sent me a worshipful gentleman, promising that my said lord should during my life give and grant to me a yearly fee, that is to note, a buck in summer and a doe in winter." Caxton, with his sale of a reasonable quantity, and his summer and winter venison, was more fortunate than others of his brethren, who speculated upon a public demand for books without any guarantee from the great and wealthy. Sweynheim and Pannartz, Germans who settled in Rome, and there printed many beautiful editions of the Latin Classics, presented a petition to the Pope, in 1471, which contains the following passage: "We were the first of the Germans who introduced this art, with vast labour and cost, into your holiness' territories, in the time of your predecessor; and encouraged by our example other printers to do the same. If you peruse the catalogue of the works printed by us, you will admire how and where we could procure a sufficient quantity of paper, or even rags, for such a number of volumes. The total of these books amounts to 12,475,—a prodigious heap,—and intolerable to us, your holiness' printers, by reason of those unsold. We are no longer able to bear the great expense of housekeeping, for want of buyers; of which there cannot be a more flagrant proof

than that our house, though otherwise spacious enough, is full of quire-books, but void of every necessary of life." For some years after the invention of printing, many of the ingenious, learned, and enterprising men who devoted themselves to the new art which was to change the face of society were ruined, because they could not sell cheaply unless they printed a considerable number of a book; and there were not readers enough to take off the stock which they thus accumulated. In time, however, as the facilities for acquiring knowledge which printing afforded created many readers, the trade of printing books became one of less general risk; and dealers in literature could afford more and more to dispense with individual patronage, and rely upon the public demand.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRESS AT WESTMINSTER — THEOLOGICAL BOOKS — CHARACTER OF CAXTON'S PRESS—THE TROY BOOK—THE GAME OF THE CHESS.

THE indications of the period at which Caxton first brought the art of printing into England are not very exact. Several of his books, supposed to have been amongst the earliest, are without date or place of impression. The first in the title of which a date or a place is mentioned is 'The Dictes and Sayinges of Philosophres,' translated by the Earl of Rivers from the French. This bears upon the

title "Enprynted by me William Caxton, at Westminster, the yere of our Lord M.CCCC. lxxvij." Another imprint, three years later, is more precise. It is in the 'Chronicles of Englond,' which book the printer says was "Enprynted by me, William Caxton, in thabbey of Westmynstre by london, &c., the v day of Juyn, the yere of thincarnacion of our lord god M.CCCC. lxxx." In 1485 'A Book of the Noble Hystoryes of Kynge Arthur' was "by me deuyded into xxi bookes chapytred and enprynted and fynysshed, in thabbey Westmestre." The expression "in the Abbey of Westminster" leaves no doubt that beneath the actual roof of some portion of the abbey Caxton carried on his art. Stow, in his 'Survey of London,' says, "In the Eleemosynary or Almonry at Westminster Abbey, now corruptly called the Ambry, for that the alms of the abbey were there distributed to the poor, John Islip, Abbot of Westminster, erected the first press of book-printing that ever was in England, and Caxton was the first that practised it in the said abbey." The careful historian of London here committed one error; John Islip did not become Abbot of Westminster till 1500. John Esteney was made abbot in 1474, and remained such until his death in 1498. His predecessor was Thomas Milling. In Dugdale's 'Monasticon' we find, speaking of Esteney, "It was in this abbot's time, and not in that of Milling, or in that of Abbot Islip, that Caxton exercised the art of printing at Westminster. He is said to have erected his office in one of the side chapels of the abbey, supposed by some of our historians to have been the Ambry or Eleemosynary." Oldys says, "Whoever authorized Caxton, it is certain that he did there, at the entrance of the abbey, exercise the art, from whence a printing-room is to this day called a chapel." When we consider the large extent of building that formed a portion of the abbey of West-

minster, before the house was shorn of its splendour by Henry the Eighth, we may readily believe that Caxton might have been accommodated in a less sacred and indeed less public place than a side chapel of the present church. There were buildings attached to that church which were removed to make room for the Chapel of Henry the Seventh. It has been conjectured that the ancient Scriptorium of the Abbey, the place where books were transcribed, might have been assigned to Caxton, to carry on an art which was fast superseding that of the transcriber. Nor are there wanting other examples of the encouragement afforded to printing by great religious societies. As early as 1480 books were printed at St. Alban's; and in 1525 there was a translation of Boetius printed in the monastery of Tavistock, by Dan Thomas Richards, monk of the same monastery. That the intercourse of Caxton with the Abbot of Westminster was on a familiar footing we learn from his own statement, in 1490: "My Lord Abbot of Westminster did shew to me late certain evidences written in Old English, for to reduce it into our English now used."

Setting up his press in this sacred place, it is somewhat remarkable how few of Caxton's books are distinctly of a religious character.* Not more than five or six can be held strictly to pertain to theological subjects. Bibles he could not print, as we shall presently notice.

There is no breviary or book of prayers found to have issued from his press. The only book distinctly connected with the Church is 'Liber Festivalis,' or Directions for keeping Feasts all the year. It is highly probable that many of such books have perished. But what furnishes a curious example of the accidents by which the smallest things may be preserved, there is now existing, preserved

* See the list in Appendix.

in Mr. Douce's collection in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, a handbill, precisely such as a publisher of the present day might distribute, printed in Caxton's largest type, inviting the people to come to his office and buy a certain book regulating the church service. "If it plese any man spirituel or temporel to bye ony Pyes of two and thre comemoracions of Salisburi vse enprynted after the forme of this present lettre whiche ben wel and truly correct, late hym come to Westmonester into the Almonesrye at the reed pale and he shal have them good chepe. Supplico stet cedula." The preface to the present Liturgy of the Church of England explains what a Pye was: "The number and hardness of the rules called the Pie, and the manifold changings of the service, was the cause, that to turn the book only was so hard and intricate a matter, that many times there was more business to find out what should be read, than to read it when it was found out." It is a curious fact that printers even at the present day call a confused heap of types Pie; and whilst no one has attempted to explain the origin of the word, we may venture to suggest that the intricacy of this Romish ordinal might lead the printers to call a mass of confused and deranged letters by a familiar expression of contempt derived from the Pie which they or their predecessors in the art had been accustomed to work upon.

Sir Thomas More has clearly shown the reason why Caxton could not venture to print a Bible, although the people would have greedily bought Wickliff's translation. There were translations of the Bible before Wickliff, and that translation which goes by the name of this great reformer was probably made up in some degree from those previous translations. Wickliff's translation was interdicted, and thus More says, "On account of the penalties ordered by Archbishop Arundel's constitution, though the

old translations that were before Wickliff's days remained lawful and were in some folk's hands had and read, yet he thought no printer would lightly be so hot to put any Bible in print at his own charge—and then hang upon a doubtful trial whether the first copy of his translation was made before Wickliff's days or since. For if it were made since, it must be approved before the printing." This was a dilemma that Caxton would have been too prudent to encounter.

In the books printed by Caxton which treat of secular subjects, there is constant evidence of the sincere and unpretending piety of this skilful and laborious author and artisan. He lived in an age when the ancient power of the church was somewhat waning; and far-sighted observers saw the cloud no bigger than a man's hand which indicated the approaching storm. One of his biographers, the Rev. Mr. Lewis, says of him that "he expressed a great sense of religion, and wrote like one who lived in the fear of God, and was very desirous of promoting his honour and glory." It was in this spirit that he desired the religious teaching of the people not to be formal and pedantic. The preface to 'The Doctrinal of Sapyence,' which was translated out of French into English by Caxton, contains a curious passage:—"This that is written in this little book ought the priests to learn and teach to their parishes: and also it is necessary for simple priests that understand not the Scriptures: and it is made for simple people and put in English. And by cause that for to hear examples stirreth and moveth the people, that ben simple, more to devotion than to that great authority of science—as it appeareth by the right reverend father and doctor Bede, priest, which saith, in the Histories of England, that a bishop of Scotland, a subtle and a great clerk, was sent by the clerks of Scot-

land into England for to preach the Word of God; but by cause he used in his sermon subtle authorities, such as [for] simple people had, nor took, no savour, he returned without doing of any great good ne profit, wherefore they sent another of less science: the which was more plain, and used commonly in his sermons examples and parables, by which he profited much more unto the erudition of the simple people than did that other."

But, in wishing the highest knowledge to be simplified and made popular, the good old printer had no thought of rendering knowledge a light and frivolous thing, to be taken up and laid down without earnestness. In his truly beautiful exposition of the uses of knowledge, contained in his prologue to the 'Mirror of the World,' he says, "Let us pray the Maker and Creator of all creatures, God Almighty, that, at the beginning of this book, it list him, of his most bounteous grace, to depart with us of the same that we may learn; and that learned, to retain; and that retained, to teach; that we may have so perfect science and knowledge of God, that we may get thereby the health of our souls, and to be partners of his glory, permanent, and without end, in heaven. Amen."

Gibbon, we think, has taken a somewhat severe view of the character of the works which were produced by the father of English printing:—"It was in the year 1474 that our first press was established in Westminster Abbey, by William Caxton: but in the choice of his authors, that liberal and industrious artist was reduced to comply with the vicious taste of his readers; to gratify the nobles with treatises on heraldry, hawking, and the game of chess, and to amuse the popular credulity with romances of fabulous knights and legends of more fabulous saints." The historian, however, notices with approbation the laudable desire which Caxton expresses to elucidate the history of

his country. But his censure of the general character of the works of Caxton's press is somewhat too sweeping. It appears to us that a more just as well as a more liberal view of the use and tendency of these works is that of Thomas Warton, which we may be excused in quoting somewhat at length :—"By means of French translations, our countrymen, who understood French much better than Latin, became acquainted with many useful books which they would not otherwise have known. With such assistances, a commodious access to the classics was opened, and the knowledge of ancient literature facilitated and familiarised in England, at a much earlier period than is imagined; and at a time when little more than the productions of speculative monks and irrefragable doctors could be obtained or were studied. . . . When these authors, therefore, appeared in a language almost as intelligible as the English, they fell into the hands of illiterate and common readers, and contributed to sow the seeds of a national erudition, and to form a popular taste. Even the French versions of the religious, philosophical, historical, and allegorical compositions of those more enlightened Latin writers who flourished in the middle ages, had their use, till better books came into vogue: pregnant as they were with absurdities, they communicated instruction on various and new subjects, enlarged the field of information, and promoted the love of reading, by gratifying that growing literary curiosity which now began to want materials for the exercise of its operations. . . . These French versions enabled Caxton, our first printer, to enrich the state of letters in this country with many valuable publications. He found it no difficult task, either by himself or the help of his friends, to turn a considerable number of these pieces into English, which he printed. Ancient learning had as yet made too little

progress among us to encourage this enterprising and industrious artist to publish the Roman authors in their original language: and had not the French furnished him with these materials, it is not likely that Virgil, Ovid, Cicero, and many other good writers would by the means of his press have been circulated in the English tongue so early as the close of the fifteenth century." Warton adds in a note, "It was a circumstance favourable at least to English literature, owing indeed to the general illiteracy of the times, that our first printers were so little employed on books written in the learned languages. Almost all Caxton's books are English. The multiplication of English copies multiplied English readers, and these again produced new vernacular writers. The existence of a press induced many persons to turn authors who were only qualified to write in their native tongue." Having thus given the somewhat different views of two most able and accomplished scholars, viewing as they did the same objects through different media, we shall proceed to notice some of the more remarkable characteristics of the books issued from Caxton's press, rather regarding them as illustrations of the state of knowledge and the manners of his time, than as mere bibliographical curiosities.

'The Histories of Troy' is a book with which our readers must now be tolerably familiar. A writer in the century succeeding Caxton, one Robert Braham, is very severe upon the old printer for this his work: "If a man studious of that history [the Trojan war] should seek to find the same in the doings of William Caxton, in his lewd [idle] 'Recueil of Troye,' what should he then find, think ye? Assuredly none other thing but a long, tedious, and brainless babbling, tending to no end, nor having any certain beginning; but proceeding therein as an idiot in his folly, that cannot make an end till he be bidden.

Much like the foolish and unsavoury doings of Orestes, whom Juvenal remembereth—which Caxton's 'Recueil,' who so list with judgment peruse, shall rather think his doings worthy to be numbered amongst the trifling tales and barren lewderies of Robin Hood and Bevis of Hampton, than remain as a monument of so worthy an history." We have no sympathy with writers, old or modern, who are severe upon "trifling tales and barren lewderies"—the stories and ballads which are the charm of childhood and the solace of age. It is somewhat hard that Caxton should be thus maltreated for having made the English familiar with that romance of the Trojan war with which all Europe was enamoured in some language or another. The authority which Le Fevre partly followed was the Troy Book of Guido di Colonna; and he is traced to have translated his book from a Norman-French poet of the time of Edward the Second; and the Norman is to be traced to Dares Phrygius and Dictys Cretensis, the supposed authors of two ancient works on the History of Troy, but which histories are held to have been manufactured by an Englishman of the twelfth century. Guido di Colonna constructed the most captivating of the romances of chivalry upon these supposititious tales of Troy. Hector and Achilles are surrounded by him with all the attributes of knight-errantry; and the Grecian manners are Gothicised with all the peculiarities of the civilization of the Middle Ages. Lydgate constructed upon this romance his poem of the Troy Book; and Chaucer availed himself of it in his poem of 'Troilus and Cressida.' Shakspere, in his wonderful play upon the same part of the Trojan story of the middle ages, has used Chaucer, Lydgate, and Caxton; and several passages show that our great dramatic poet was perfectly familiar with the translation of our old printer, which was so popular that

by Shakspere's time it had passed through six editions and continued to be read even in the last century.

'The Book of the whole Life of Jason,' printed by Caxton in 1475, is another of these middle-age romances, founded upon the supposititious histories of Dares and Dictys.

Of 'The Game and Play of the Chess,' Caxton printed two editions, which he translated himself from the French. The first was finished on the last day of March, 1474; and it is supposed to have been the first book which he printed in England. Bagford says, "Caxton's first book in the Abbey was 'The Game of Chess;' a book in those times much in use with all sorts of people, and in all likelihood first desired by the abbot, and the rest of his friends and masters." It was a book that Caxton clearly intended for the diffusion of knowledge amongst all ranks of people; for in his second edition he says, in not very complimentary phrase, "The noble clerks have written and compiled many notable works and histories," that they might come "to the knowledge and understanding of such as be ignorant, of which the number is infinite." And he adds, with still plainer speech, that, according to Solomon, "the number of fools is infinite." He says that amongst these noble clerks there was an excellent doctor of divinity in the kingdom of France, which "hath made a book of the chess moralised, which at such a time as I was resident in Bruges came into my hands."

It would seem to be an ingenious device of the reverend writer of the book of chess which Caxton translated, to associate with very correct instructions as to the mode of playing the game, such moralisations as would enable him therewith to teach the people "to understand wisdom and virtue." Caxton readily adopts the same notion. He dedicates the book to the Duke of Clarence: "Forasmuch as I have understood and known that you are inclined

unto the commonweal of the king, our said sovereign lord, his nobles, lords, and common people of his noble realm of England, and that ye saw gladly the inhabitants of the same informed in good, virtuous, profitable, and honest manners." This book contains authorities, sayings, and stories, "applied unto the morality of the public weal, as well of the nobles and of the common people, after the game and play of chess;" and Caxton trusts that "other, of what estate or degree he or they stand in, may see in this little book that they govern themselves as they ought to do." This book of chess contains four treatises. The first describes the invention of the game in the time of a king of Babylon, Emsmerodach, a cruel king, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, to whom a philosopher showed the game for the purpose of exhibiting "the manners and condition of a king, of the nobles, and of the common people and their offices, and how they should be touched and drawn, and how he should amend himself and become virtuous." This is a bold fable, and takes us farther back than Sir William Jones, who says that chess was imported from the west of India, in the sixth century, and known immemorially in Hindustan by the name of Chaturanga, or the four members of an army, namely, elephants, horses, chariots, and foot-soldiers. The second treatise in Caxton's book describes, first, the office of a king: by this name the principal piece was always known. Secondly, of the queen; this name would seem to belong to the time of Caxton, for Chaucer and Lydgate call the piece Fers or Feers, a noble, a general,—hence Peer. Thirdly, of the Alphyns: this is the same as the present bishop; the French called this personage the Fou, and Rabelais calls him the Archer. Fourthly, the knight, who was always called by this name, in English and French chess. The rook, the fifth dignified piece, is from the Eastern name

Ruc. Caxton goes on to inform us that the third treatise is of the offices of the common people. This treatise relates to the pawns; and a curious thing it is that the eight pawns of the board are taken by him each to represent large classes of the commonalty. The denominations of these classes somewhat vary in the two editions, but their general arrangement is the same. We have, in the first class, labourers and tillers of the earth; in the second, smiths and other workers in iron and metal; in the third, notaries, advocates, scriveners, drapers, and makers of cloth; in the fourth, merchants and changers; in the fifth, physicians, leeches, spicers, and apothecaries; in the sixth, taverners, hostelers, and victuallers; in the seventh, guards of the cities, receivers of custom, and tollers; and lastly, messengers, couriers, ribalds, and players at the dice.

The second edition of 'The Game of the Chess,' which is without date or place, was the first book printed in the English language which contained woodcuts. On the following page we give a fac-simile of the figure of the knight in Caxton's volume.

The original art of engraving on wood, and the production of block-books, gradually merged, as we have seen, into the art of printing from movable types. From that time woodcuts became a secondary part of books, used, indeed, very often by the early printers, but by no means forming an indispensable branch of typography. Imitating the manuscript books, the first printers chiefly employed the wood-engraver upon initial letters; and sometimes the pages of their works were surrounded by borders, which contained white lines or sprigs of foliage upon a black ground. If a figure, or group of figures, was introduced, little more than the outline was first attempted. By degrees, however, endeavours were made to represent gradations of shadow; and a few light hatchings, or white

dots, were employed. All cross-hatchings, such as characterize a line-engraving upon metal, were carefully avoided by the early woodcutters, on account of the difficulty in the process. Mr. Ottley, in his 'History of Engraving,' says that an engraver on wood, of the name of Wohlgemuth (who flourished at Nuremburg about 1480), "perceived that, though difficult, this was not impossible;"

and, in the cuts of the 'Nuremburg Chronicle,' a "successful attempt was first made to imitate the bold hatchings of a pen-drawing." Albert Dürer, an artist of extraordinary talent, became the pupil of Wohlgemuth; and by him, and many others, wood-engraving was carried to a perfection which it subsequently lost till its revival in our own country.

Lord Rivers presenting his book to Edward IV.

CHAPTER VII.

FEMALE MANNERS—LORD RIVERS—POPULAR HISTORY—POPULAR SCIENCE — POPULAR FABLES — POPULAR TRANSLATIONS — THE CANTERBURY TALES—STATUTES—BOOKS OF CHIVALRY—CAXTON'S LAST DAYS.

IN the library belonging to the Archbishops of Canterbury, at Lambeth, is a beautiful manuscript, on vellum, of a French work, 'Les Dicts Moraux des Philosophes,' which contains the illumination of which the above is a copy. In lines written under the illumination the book is stated to be translated by "Antony erle," by which Lord Rivers is meant. This book was printed by Caxton in 1477; and it is held that the man kneeling by the side of the earl in

the illumination is the printer of the book. We have already mentioned the confidential intercourse which subsisted between Lord Rivers and his printer, with regard to the revision of this work. (See page 78.) The passages which we there quote are given in a sort of appendix, in which Caxton professes to have himself translated a chapter upon women, which Lord Rivers did not think fit to meddle with, and which he prints with a real or affected apprehension. The printer's statement is altogether such a piece of sly humour, that we willingly transcribe it, trusting that our readers will see the drollery through the quaintness:—

"I find that my said lord hath left out certain and divers conclusions touching women. Whereof I marvelled that my said lord hath not writ on them, nor what hath moved him so to do, nor what cause he had at that time. But I suppose that some fair lady hath desired him to leave it out of his book; or else he was amorous on some noble lady, for whose love he would not set it in his book; or else for the very affection, love, and good will that he hath unto all ladies and gentlewomen, he thought that Socrates spared the sooth, and wrote of women more than truth; which I cannot think that so true a man and so noble a philosopher as Socrates was, should write otherwise than truth. For if he had made fault in writing of women, he ought not or should not be believed in his other Dictes and Sayings. But I perceive that my said lord knoweth verily that such defaults be not had nor found in the women born and dwelling in these parts nor regions of the world. Socrates was a Greek, born in a far country from hence, which country is all of other conditions than this is, and men and women of other nature than they be here in this country; for I wot well, of whatsoever condition women be in Greece, the women of this country be

right good, wise, pleasant, humble, discreet, sober, chaste, obedient to their husbands, true, secret, stedfast, ever busy, and never idle, attemperate in speaking, and virtuous in all their works; or at least should be so. For which causes so evident, my said lord, as I suppose, thought it was not of necessity to set in his book the sayings of his author Socrates touching women."

There is a book translated by Caxton from the French, and printed by him in 1484, which we may incidentally here notice, as illustrating the female manners of that century. It is called 'The Knight of the Tower;' and really would seem to justify the sarcasm of Caxton where he says, "The women of this country be right good, &c., or at least should be so." The preface implies that the work, though written by a Frenchman, applies to the contemporary state of society in England; and it may be well to see how our ladies were employed about four centuries ago. It appears from this curious performance that the ladies, although well accomplished in needlework, confectionery, church music, and even taught something of the rude surgery of those days, were not great proficients in reading, and the art of writing was thought to be better let alone by them. The Knight of the Tower complains of the levity of the ladies. Their extravagance in dress, the husband's standing complaint, is thus put by the Knight of the Tower: "The wives say to their husbands every day, 'Sir, such a wife and such hath such goodly array that beseemeth her well, and I pray you I may have of the same.' And if her husband say, 'Wife, if such have such array, such that are wiser than they have it not,' she will say, 'No force it is [that is of no consequence], for they cannot wear it; and if I have it, ye shall see how well it will become me, for I can wear it.' And thus with her words her husband must needs

ordain her that which she desireth, or he shall never have peace with her, for they will find so many reasons that they will not be warned [put off]." The women of lower estate come in for the same censure, the complaint being that they *fur* their draperies and *fur* their heels. It appears to have been the practice for ladies to go very freely to feasts and assemblies, to joustings and tournaments, without what we now call the protection of a husband or a male relation. A contemporary writer says they lavished their wealth and corrupted their virtue by these freedoms. If we may judge from the warnings which the Knight of the Tower gives his daughters of the discipline they would receive at the hands of their husbands for any act of disobedience,—the discipline not only of hard words, but of harder blows,—it is not to be wondered at that they sought abroad for some relief to the gloom and severity of their home lives. It is pleasant, amidst these illustrations of barbarous and profligate manners, to find a picture of that real goodness which has distinguished the female character in all ages, and which, especially in the times of feudal oppression of which we are speaking, mitigated the lot of those who were dependent upon the benevolence of the great possessors of property. The good Lady Cecile of Balleville is thus described by the Knight of the Tower: "Her daily ordinance was, that she rose early enough, and had ever friars and two or three chaplains, which said matins before her within the oratory. And after, she heard a high mass and two low, and said her service full devoutly. And after this she went and arrayed herself, and walked in her garden or else about her place, saying her other devotions and prayers. And as time was she went to dinner. And after dinner, if she wist and knew any sick folk or women in their childbed, she went to see and

visited them, and made to be brought to them her best meat. And there as she might not go herself, she had a servant proper therefore, which rode upon a little horse, and bare with him great plenty of good meat and drink, for to give to the poor and sick folk there as they were. Also she was of such custom, that, if she knew any poor gentlewoman that should be wedded, she arrayed her with her jewels. Also she went to the obsequies of poor gentlewomen, and gave there torches, and such other luminary as it needed thereto. And after she had heard evensong she went to her supper if she fasted not, and timely she went to bed, and made her steward to come to her to wit [know] what meat should be had the next day. She made great abstinence, and wore the hair upon the Wednesday and upon the Friday." This is a true character of the Middle Ages ;—goodness based upon sincere piety, but that degenerating into penances and mortifications, which our Reformed faith teaches us to believe are unnecessary for spiritual elevation.

Caxton's early friend and patron, Lord Rivers, appears, as far as we can judge from the books which remain, to have been the only one of the first English printer's contemporaries who rendered him any literary assistance. He contributed three works to Caxton's press—namely, the 'Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers,' 'The Moral Proverbs of Christine de Pisa,' and the book named 'Cordial.'

The book named 'Cordial' is clearly described in a prologue by Caxton. It was delivered to him, he says, by Lord Rivers, "for to be imprinted and so multiplied to go abroad among the people, that thereby more surely might be remembered the four last things undoubtedly coming." Caxton, in an elaborate commendation of his patron, of whose former "great tribulation and adversity"

he speaks, says, "It seemeth that he conceiveth well the mutability and the unstableness of this present life, and that he desireth, with a great zeal and spiritual love, our ghostly help and perpetual salvation." Lord Rivers had indeed borne tribulation since the time when, the flower of Edward's court, he jousted with the Bastard of Burgundy in Smithfield, in 1468. In the following year his father and brother were murdered by a desperate faction at Northampton. When Lord Rivers, conceiving the mutability and unstableness of life, wrote the book called 'Cordial,' he was only six and thirty years of age. Three years after Caxton printed the book, the translator was himself murdered at Pomfret by the Protector Richard. Shakspere did not do injustice to the noble character of this peer when he makes him exclaim, when he was led to the block,

> "Sir Richard Ratcliff, let me tell thee this,—
> To-day shalt thou behold a subject die,
> For truth, for duty, and for loyalty."
> *Richard III.*, Act iii., Scene 2.

There is left to us a remarkable fragment which indicates to us something higher than the ability and literary attainment of this unfortunate nobleman. It has been preserved by John Rouse, a contemporary historian, who lived in the pleasant solitude of Guy's Cliff, near Warwick, and died there in 1491. He says (we translate from his Latin), "In the time of his imprisonment at Pomfret he wrote a balet in English, which has been shown to me, having these words—Sum what musyng," &c.; and then Rouse transcribes the ballad, of which the second stanza is imperfect, but has been supplied from another ancient copy. Percy, who prints the ballad in his 'Reliques,' says, "If we consider that it was written during his cruel confinement in Pomfret Castle, a short time before his

execution in 1483, it gives us a fine picture of the composure and steadiness with which this stout earl beheld his approaching fate." We subjoin the ballad, modernising the orthography:—

Somewhat musing, and more mourning,
In remembering the unstedfastness,
This world being of such wheeling,
Me contrarying what may I guess.

I fear doubtless, remediless
Is now to seize my woful chance;
For unkindness withouten less
And no redress, me doth avance,

With displeasance to my grievance
And no surance of remedy:
Lo in this trance, now in substance
Such is my dance, willing to die.

Methinks truly bounden am I,
And that greatly, to be content,
Seeing plainly fortune doth wry
All contrary from mine intent.

My life was lent me to one intent;
It is nigh spent. Welcome, fortune!
But I ne went thus to be shent,
But she it meant—such is her won [wont].

Turn we to one of the more important works of Caxton, in which he sought to inform his countrymen generally with a knowledge of history. 'The Chronicles of England,' printed in 1480, begins at the fabulous period before the Romans, and ends at the commencement of the reign of Edward IV. The early legends of English History, which even Milton did not disdain to touch upon, are founded upon the 'History' of Nennius, which was composed in the ninth century, and which was copied by Geoffrey of Monmouth and other of the early chroniclers. Caxton took the thing as he found it, and continued the narrative

to his own time. He deals prudently with contemporary events. Caxton followed up these chronicles in the same year with another book, called 'The Description of Britain,' in which he tells of the extent of the island, its marvels and wonders, its highways, rivers, cities, and towns, provinces, laws, bishoprics, and languages. He describes also Scotland and Ireland. Some of his marvels and wonders are a little astounding; but others are as precise in their description, and as forcible (brevity being an essential quality), as we could well desire. Thus of Stonehenge: "At Stonehinge beside Salisbury there be great stones and wondrous huge; and be reared on high, as it were gates set upon other gates; nevertheless it is not known cleanly nor aperceived how and wherefore they be so areared and so wonderfully hanged."

From the chronicles of his own country Caxton sought to lead his readers forward to a knowledge of the history of other countries. He published in 1482 'The Polychronicon, containing the bearings and deeds of many times.' This book was originally composed by Higden, a Benedictine monk of Chester; and was translated from Latin into English by John de Trevisa, who lived in the times of Edward III. and Richard II. Caxton in his title-page says, "Imprinted by William Caxton, after having somewhat changed the rude and old English, that is to wit certain words which in these days be neither used nor understanden." In another place he says, "And now at this time simply imprinted and set in form by me, William Caxton, and a little embellished from the old making." Caxton was here doing what every person who desires to advance the knowledge of his time, by extending that knowledge beyond the narrow circle of scholars and antiquarians, must always do. He popularised an old book; he made it intelligible. He did not do,—as some verbal

pedants amongst us still persist in doing,—present our old writers, and especially our poets, in all the capriciousness of their original orthography. He was the first great diffuser of knowledge amongst us; and surely we think he took a judicious course. He says of the 'Polychronicon,' "The book is general, touching shortly many notable matters." But, *general* as the book was, and extensively as he desired to circulate it according to his limited means, he does not approach his task without a due sense of the importance of the knowledge he was seeking to impart. The praise of history in his proem is truly eloquent: "History is a perpetual conservatrice of those things that have been before this present time; and also a quotidian witness of benefits, of malfaits [evil deeds], great acts, and triumphal victories of all manner of people. And also, if the terrible feigned fables of poets have much stirred and moved men to right and conserving of justice, how much more is to be supposed that history, assertrice of virtue and a mother of all philosophy, moving our manners to virtue, reformeth and reconcileth near hand all those men which through the infirmity of our moral nature hath led the most part of their life in otiosity [idleness], and misspended their time, passed right soon out of remembrance: of which life and death is equal oblivion." Again, "Other monuments distributed in divers changes endure but for a short time or season; but the virtue of history diffused and spread by the universal world hath time, which consumeth all other things, as conservatrice and keeper of her work."

'The Imago or Mirror of the World' is one of the popular books which Caxton translated from the French. It treats of a vast variety of subjects, after the imperfect natural philosophy of those days. We have an account of the seven liberal arts; of nature, how she worketh; and how

the earth holdeth him right in the middle of the world. We have also much geographical information, amongst which the wonders of Inde occupy a considerable space. Meteorology and astronomy take up another large portion. The work concludes with an account of the celestial paradise. This book seems specially addressed to high and courtly readers, for Caxton says, 'The hearts of nobles, in eschewing of idleness at such time as they have none other virtuous occupations on hand, ought to exercise them in reading, studying, and visiting the noble feats and deeds of the sage and wise men, sometime travelling in profitable virtues; of whom it happeneth oft that some be inclined to visit the books treating of sciences particular; and other to read and visit books speaking of feats of arms, of love, or of other marvellous histories; and among all other, this present book, which is called the 'Image or Mirror of the World,' ought to be visited, read, and known, by cause it treateth of the world, and of the wonderful division thereof." But the translator tells us, "I have endeavoured me therein, at the request and desire, cost and dispense, of the honourable and worshipful man, Hugh Brice, citizen and alderman of London." We may therefore believe that Caxton intended this book for a wider circulation than that of the nobles whom he addresses; especially as he says, "I have made it so plain that every man reasonable may understand it, if he advisedly and attentively read it, or hear it." The good old printer rendered the book intelligible to all classes, under the condition that all who read it should give their attention. This is one of the books into which Caxton has introduced woodcuts, giving twenty-seven figures, "without which it may not lightly [easily] be understood." These twenty-seven figures are diagrams, explanatory of some of the scientific principles laid down in this book; but there are

eleven other cuts illustrative of other subjects treated in the work. An idea may be formed of the manner in which those cuts are engraved from the following fac-simile of 'Music.'

One of the most popular books of Caxton's translation must unquestionably have been the 'History of Reynard the Fox.' It is held that this work was composed in the twelfth century; and surely the author must have been a man of high genius to have constructed a fable which has been ever since popular in all countries, and delights us even to this hour. Caxton has no woodcuts to his edition, to which the book subsequently owed a portion of its attractions.

'The Subtil Histories and Fables of Esop,' translated by Caxton from the French, were printed by him in 1483, "The first year of the reign of King Richard the Third."

In the first leaf there is a supposed portrait of Esop, a large rough woodcut, exhibiting him as he is described, with a great head, large visage, long jaws, sharp eyes, a short neck, *curb*-backed, and so forth. There is a controversy whether Richard the Third was a deformed man or not. It is held by many that it was one of the scandals put forth under his triumphant successor (which scandal Shakspere has for ever made current), that Richard was

> "Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
> Deform'd, unfinish'd."

It strikes us that Caxton would scarcely have ventured, in the first year of King Richard III., to exhibit a print of a hump-backed Esop (for any print was then a rare thing), if his dread sovereign had been remarkable amongst the people for a similar defect. The conclusion of these fables of Esop has a story told by Caxton as from himself, which is a remarkable specimen of a plain narrative style, with a good deal of sly humour:—

"Now then I will finish all these fables with this tale that followeth, which a worshipful priest and a parson told me late: he said that there were dwelling at Oxenford two priests, both Masters of Arts—of whom that one was quick and could put himself forth; and that other was a good simple priest. And so it happened that the master that was pert and quick was anon promoted to a benefice or twain, and after to prebends, and for to be a dean of a great prince's chapel, supposing and weening that his fellow, the simple priest, should never be promoted, but be always an annual, or, at the most, a parish priest. So after a long time that this worshipful man, this dean, came running into a good parish with five or seven horses, like a prelate, and came into the church of the said parish, and found there this good simple man, sometime his fellow,

which came and welcomed him lowly. And that other bade him 'Good morrow, Master John,' and took him slightly by the hand, and axed him where he dwelt. And the good man said, 'In this parish.' 'How,' said he, 'are ye here a sole priest, or a parish priest?' 'Nay, sir,' said he, 'for lack of a better, though I am not able nor worthy, I am parson and curate of this parish.' And then that other vailed [lowered] his bonnet, and said, 'Master Parson, I pray you to be not displeased; I had supposed ye had not been beneficed. But, master,' said he, 'I pray you what is this benefice worth to you a year?' 'Forsooth,' said the good simple man, 'I wot never; for I make never accompts thereof, how well I have had it four or five years.' 'And know ye not,' said he, 'what it is worth?—it should seem a good benefice.' 'No, forsooth,' said he, 'but I wot well what it shall be worth to me.' 'Why, said he, 'what shall it be worth?' 'Forsooth,' said he, 'if I do my true dealing in the cure of my parishes in preaching and teaching, and do my part belonging to my cure, I shall have heaven therefore. And if their souls be lost, or any of them, by my default, I shall be punished therefore. And hereof I am sure.' And with that word the rich dean was abashed: and thought he should be the better, and take more heed to his cures and benefices than he had done. This was a good answer of a good priest and an honest. And herewith I finish this book, translated and imprinted by me, William Caxton." The moral of the fable is not obsolete.

One of Caxton's most splendid books, of which he seems to have printed three editions, was 'The Golden Legend.' This is, indeed, an important work, printed in double columns, and containing between four and five hundred pages, which are largely illustrated with woodcuts. It was not without great caution, as we have already mentioned

(page 98), that Caxton proceeded with this heavy and expensive undertaking. Happy would it have been for all printers if puissant and virtuous earls, and others in high places had thought it a duty to encourage knowledge by taking a "reasonable quantity" of a great work; but happier are we now, when, such assistance being grudgingly bestowed or honestly despised, the makers of books can depend upon something more satisfying than the rich man's purse, which was generally associated with "the proud man's contumely."

In the prologue to the 'Golden Legend' Caxton recites several of the works which he had previously "translated out of French into English at the request of certain lords, ladies, and gentlemen." Those recited are the 'Recueil of Troy,' the 'Book of the Chess,' 'Jason,' the 'Mirror of the World,' Ovid's 'Metamorphoses,' and 'Godfrey of Boulogne.' It is remarkable that no printed copy exists of Ovid's 'Metamorphoses;' but in the library of Magdalen College, Cambridge, there is a manuscript containing five books of the 'Metamorphoses,' which purport to be translated by Caxton. It was evidently a part of his plan for the encouragement of liberal education, to present a portion of the people with translations of the classics through the ready means that were open to him of re-translation from the French. Many translators in later times have availed themselves of such aids, without the honesty to indicate the immediate sources of their versions. Caxton printed 'The Book of Tully of Old Age,' and 'Tullius his Book of Friendship.' He seems to have had great difficulty in obtaining a copy of an old translation of 'Tullius de Senectute.' The Book 'De Amicitia' was translated by John, Earl of Worcester, the celebrated adherent of the house of York, who was beheaded in 1470. Caxton, we think somewhat unnecessarily, limits the perusal of the treatise on

Old Age. "This book is not requisite nor eke convenient for every rude and simple man, which understandeth not of science nor cunning, and for such as have not heard of the noble policy and prudence of the Romans; but for noble, wise, and great lords, gentlemen, and merchants, that have been and daily be occupied in matter touching the public weal: and in especial unto them that been passed their green age, and eke their middle age, called virility, and been approached unto *senectute*, called old and ancient age. Wherein they may see how to suffer and bear the same patiently; and what surety and virtue been in the same, and have also cause to be joyous and glad that they have escaped and passed the manifold perils and doubteous adventures that been in juvente and youth, as in this said book here following ye may more plainly see."

'The Book of Eneydos,' compiled from Virgil, is not a translation of Virgil's great epic, but a sort of historical narrative formed upon the course of the poet's great story. The most remarkable passage of this book is that of Caxton's preface, in which he complains of the unsteadfastness of our language, and the difficulty that he found between plain, rude, and curious terms. (See page 15.) In this translation he again limits his work to a particular class of persons; as if he felt, which was probably a prejudice of his time, that the inferior members of the laity ought not to touch anything that pertained to scholastic learning. He says, "Forasmuch as this present book is not for a rude uplandish man to labour therein, nor read it, but only for a clerk and a noble gentleman that feeleth and understandeth in faits of arms, in love, and in noble chivalry: therefore, in mean between both, I have reduced and translated this said book into our English, not over rude nor curious, but in such terms as shall be understanden, by God's grace, according to my copy."

'The book called Cathon' (Cato's Morals) was destined by Caxton for a wider circulation:—"In my judgment it is the best book for to be taught to young children in schools, and also to people of every age it is full convenient if it be well understanden."

Dr. Dibdin, in his 'Typographical Antiquities,' says of Caxton, "Exclusively of the labours attached to the working of his press as a new art, our typographer contrived, though well stricken in years, to translate not fewer than five thousand closely printed folio pages. As a translator, therefore, he ranks among the most laborious, and, I would hope, not the least successful, of his tribe. The foregoing conclusion is the result of a careful enumeration of all the books translated as well as printed by him; which [the translated books], if published in the modern fashion, would extend to nearly twenty-five octavo volumes!" The exact nature of his labours seems, as might well be imagined, to have been often determined by very accidental circumstances. One noble lord requests him to produce this book, and one worshipful gentleman urges him to translate that. He says himself of his Virgil, "After divers works made, translated, and achieved, having no work in hand, I, sitting in my study whereas lay many divers pamphlets and books, happened that to my hand came a little book in French, which late was translated out of Latin by some noble clerk of France, which book is named Eneydos, made in Latin by that noble poet and great clerk Virgil." Some books, indeed, he would be determined to print by their existing popularity. Such were his two editions of Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales,' which we may be sure, from his sound criticism, he felt the necessity of promulgating to a much wider circle than had been reached by the transcribers. (See page 36.) Caxton was especially the devoted printer of Chaucer.

His truly honourable conduct in venturing upon a new edition of the 'Canterbury Tales,' when he found his first was incorrect, exhibits an example in the first printer and the first publisher which the printers and publishers of all subsequent times ought to reverence and imitate. The early printers, English and foreign, were indeed a high and noble race. They did not set themselves up to be the patrons of letters; they did not dispense their dole to scholars grudgingly and thanklessly; they worked with them; they encountered with them the risks of profit and of fame; they were scholars themselves; they felt the deep responsibility of their office; they carried on the highest of all commerce in an elevated temper; they were not mere hucksters and chafferers. It was in no spirit of pride, it was in the spirit of duty, that Caxton raised a table of verses to Chaucer in Westminster Abbey. In his edition of Boetius, which he gives us to understand was translated by Master Geoffrey Chaucer, he says, "And furthermore I desire and require you, that of your charity ye would pray for the soul of the said worshipful man Geoffrey Chaucer, first translator of this said book into English, and embellisher in making the said language ornate and fair, which shall endure perpetually, and therefore he ought eternally to be remembered; of whom the body and corps lieth buried in the Abbey of Westminster, beside London, to fore the chapel of Saint Benet, by whose sepulture is written on a table, hanging on a pillar, his epitaph made by a poet-laureate, whereof the copy followeth." The writer of the Life of Chaucer, in the 'Biographia Britannica,' says, "It is very probable he lay beneath a large stone of gray marble in the pavement where the monument to Mr. Dryden now stands, which is in the front of that chapel [St. Benet's], upon the erecting of which [Dryden's monument] this stone was taken up,

and sawed in pieces to make good the pavement. At least this seems best to answer the description of the place given by Caxton." There appears, according to the ancient editors of Chaucer's works, to have been two Latin lines upon his tombstone previous to the epitaph set up upon a pillar by Caxton. That epitaph was written by Stephanus Suriganius, poet-laureate of Milan. The monument of Chaucer, which still remains in the Abbey, around which the ashes of Spenser, and Beaumont, and Drayton, and Jonson, and Cowley, and Dryden have clustered, was erected by an Oxford student in 1555. There might have been worse things preserved, and yet to be looked upon, in that Abbey, than honest old Caxton's epitaph upon him whom he calls "the worshipful father and first founder and embellisher of ornate eloquence in our English."

As the popularity of Chaucer demanded various impressions of his works from Caxton's press, so did he print an apparently cheap edition of Gower's 'Confessio Amantis,' in small type. Two of Lydgate's works were also printed by him. The more fugitive poetry which issued from his press has probably all perished. In one of the volumes of Old Ballads in the British Museum is a fragment of a poem, of which nothing further is known, telling the story of some heroine that lived a life of unvaried solitude:—

> "From her childhood I find that she fled
> Office of woman, and to wood she went,
> And many a wild harte's blood she shed
> With arrows broad that she to them sent."

One of the most important uses of early printing in England is to be found in fragments of the Statutes of the Realm, made in the first parliament of Richard III., and in the first, second, and third parliaments of Henry VII.,

some leaves of which exist. That the promulgation of the laws would soon follow the introduction of the art of printing was a natural consequence. Early in the next century the publication of Acts of Parliament became an important branch of trade; and a King's Printer was formally appointed. Up to our own times all the cheapening processes of the art of printing had been withheld, at least in their results, from that branch of printing which was to instruct the people in their new laws. The Statutes were the dearest of books, and kept dear for no other purpose but to preserve one relic of the monopolies of the days of the Stuarts. The abuse has been partially remedied.

We have purposely reserved to the conclusion of this account of the productions of Caxton's press, some notice of those works to the undertaking of which he seems to have been moved by his familiarity with the frequenters of the court,—those whose talk was of tournaments and battles, of gallant knights and noble dames; and whose heads, like that of the worthy Knight of La Mancha, were "full of nothing but enchantments, quarrels, battles, challenges, wounds, complaints, amours, torments." It is quite marvellous to look upon the enthusiasm with which Master Caxton deals with these matters in the days when he had achieved

"The silver livery of advised age."

It offers us one of the many proofs of the energy and youthfulness of his character. We have already quoted his address to the knights of England (see page 66), given in his 'Book of the Order of Chivalry,' supposed to have been printed in 1484. After this address he proposes a question which shows that he considers he has fallen upon degenerate days. "How many knights be there now in

England that have the use and the exercise of a knight? that is to wit, that he knoweth his horse, and his horse him; that is to say, he being ready at a point to have all thing that belongeth to a knight, an horse that is according and broken after his hand, his armour and harness suit, and so forth, *et cetera*. I suppose, an a due search should be made, there should be many founden that lack: the more pity is! I would it pleased our sovereign Lord, that twice or thrice a year, or at the least once, he would cry jousts of peace, to the end that every knight should have horse and harness, and also the use and craft of a knight, and also to tourney one against one, or two against two; and the best to have a prize, a diamond or jewel, such as should please the prince. This should cause gentlemen to resort to the ancient customs of chivalry to great fame and renown: and also to be alway ready to serve their prince when he shall call them, or have need." There is always some compensating principle arising in the world to prevent its too rapid degeneracy; and thus, although the tournament has long ceased, except as a farce, there is many a noble who may still say, "That he knoweth his horse, and his horse him," through the attractions of Melton Mowbray and Epsom. Hunting and horse-racing have done much to keep up our pristine civilization. In 'The Fait of Arms and Chivalry,' 1489, Caxton undertakes a higher strain. He translates this book, "to the end that every gentleman born to arms and all manner men of war, captains, soldiers, victuallers, and all other, should have knowledge how they ought to behave them in the faits of war and of battles." And yet, strange to relate, this belligerent book was written by a fair lady, Christina of Pisa. The 'Histories of King Arthur,' printed in 1485, lands us at once into all the legendary hero-worship of the Middle Ages. Caxton, in his preface to this translation by

Sir Thomas Mallory, gives us a pretty full account of the Nine Worthies, "the best that ever were;" and then he goes on to expound his reasons for once doubting whether the Histories of Arthur were anything but fables, and how he was convinced that he was a real man. But surely in these chivalrous books Caxton had an honest purpose. He exhorts noble lords and ladies, with all other estates, to read this said book, "wherein they shall well find many joyous and pleasant histories, and noble and renowned acts of humanity, gentleness, and chivalries; for herein may be seen noble chivalry, courtesy, humanity, friendliness, hardiness, love, friendship, cowardice, murder, hate, virtue, and sin. Do after the good, and leave the evil, and it shall bring you to good fame and renown." 'The Life of Charles the Great' succeeded the 'Histories of King Arthur;' for, according to Caxton, Charlemagne was the second of the three worthy. It is in the preface to this book that Caxton says that his father and mother in his youth sent him to school, by which, by the sufferance of God, he gets his living.

We may conclude this imperfect description of Caxton's labours in the literature of romance and chivalry, so characteristic of the age in which he lived, with the following extract from the 'History of King Blanchardine and Queen Eglantine his Wife,' which he translated from the French, at the command of the Duchess of Somerset, mother of King Henry VII. The passage shows us that the old printers were dealers in foreign books as well as in their own productions: "Which book I had long to fore *sold* to my said lady, and knew well that the story of it was honest and joyful to all virtuous young noble gentlemen and women, for to read therein, as for their pastime. For under correction, in my judgment, histories of noble feats and valiant acts of arms and war, which have been

achieved in old time of many noble princes, lords, and knights, are as well for to see and know their valiantness for to stand in the special grace and love of their ladies, and in like wise for gentle young ladies and demoiselles for to learn to be stedfast and constant in their part to them that they once have promised and agreed to, such as have put their lives oft in jeopardy for to please them to stand in grace, as it is to occupy the ken and study overmuch in books of contemplation." This is a defence of novel-reading which we could scarcely have expected at so early a period of our literature.

In 1490 Caxton was approaching, according to all his biographers, to the great age of fourscore. About this period he appears to have consigned some relation to the grave, perhaps his wife. In the first year of the churchwardens' accounts of the parish of St. Margaret's, Westminster, from May 17, 1490, to June 3, 1492, there is the following entry:—

"Item; atte bureynge of Mawde Caxton for
torches and tapers . . . . . iiij^{s} ij^{d}."

On the 15th June, 1490, Caxton finished translating out of French into English 'The Art and Craft to know well to die.' The commencement of the book is an abrupt one: "When it is so, that what man maketh or doeth it is made to come to some end, and if the thing be good and well made it must needs come to good end; then by better and greater reason every man ought to intend in such wise to live in this world, in keeping the commandments of God, that he may come to a good end. And then out of this world, full of wretchedness and tribulations, he may go to heaven unto God and his saints, unto joy perdurable."

That the end of Caxton was a good end we have little doubt. We have a testimony, which we shall presently see, that he *worked* to the end. He worked upon a book of pious instruction to the last day of his life. He was not slumbering when his call came. He was still labouring at the work for which he was born.

There is the following entry in the churchwardens' accounts of the parish of St. Margaret, in the second year of the period we have above mentioned:—

"Item; atte bureyng of WILLIAM CAXTON
for iiij torches . . . . . vj^{s} viij^{d}
Item; for the belle at same bureyng . vj^{d}."

Mark of Wynkyn de Worde.*

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHAPEL—THE COMPANIONS—INCREASE OF READERS—BOOKS MAKE READERS—CAXTON'S TYPES—WYNKYN'S DREAM—THE FIRST PAPER-MILL.

It was evensong time when, after a day of listlessness, the printers in the Almonry at Westminster prepared to close the doors of their workshop. This was a tolerably spacious room, with a carved oaken roof. The setting sun shone brightly into the chamber, and lighted up such furniture as no other room in London could then exhibit. Between the columns which supported the roof stood two presses—ponderous machines. A *form* of types lay unread upon the *table* of one of these presses; the other was empty. There were *cases* ranged between the opposite columns; but there was no *copy* suspended ready for the compositors

* He always, in these marks, associated the device of Caxton with his own; glorying, as he well might, in succeeding to the business of his honoured master, and continuing for so many years the good work which he had begun.

to proceed with in the morning. No heap of wet paper was piled upon the floor. The *balls*, removed from the presses, were rotting in a corner. The *ink-blocks* were dusty, and a thin film had formed over the oily pigment. He who had set these machines in motion, and filled the whole space with the activity of mind, was dead. His daily work was ended.

Three grave-looking men, decently clothed in black, were girding on their swords. Their caps were in their hands. The door opened, and the chief of the workmen came in. It was Wynkyn de Worde. With short speech, but with looks of deep significance, he called a *chapel*—the printer's parliament—a conclave as solemn and as omnipotent as the Saxons' Witenagemot. Wynkyn was the Father of the Chapel.

The four drew their high stools round the *imposing-stone* —those stools on which they had sat through many a day of quiet labour, steadily working to the distant end of some ponderous folio, without hurry or anxiety. Upon the stone lay two uncorrected folio pages—a portion of the 'Lives of the Fathers.' The *proof* was not returned. He that they had followed a few days before to his grave in Saint Margaret's Church had lifted it once back to his failing eyes,—and then they closed in night.

"Companions," said Wynkyn (surely that word "*companions*" tells of the antiquity of printing, and of the old love and fellowship that subsisted amongst its craft)—"companions, the good work will not stop."

"Wynkyn," said Richard Pynson, "who is to carry on the work?"

"I am ready," answered Wynkyn.

A faint expression of joy rose to the lips of these honest men, but it was damped by the remembrance of him they had lost.

"He died," said Wynkyn, "as he lived. The 'Lives of the Holy Fathers' is finished, as far as the translator's labour. There is the rest of the copy. Read the words of the last page, which *I* have written :—

"Thus endeth the most virtuous history of the devout and right-renowned lives of holy fathers, living in desert, worthy of remembrance to all well-disposed persons, which hath been translated out of French into English by William Caxton of Westminster, late dead, and finished at the last day of his life."*

The tears were in all their eyes; and "God rest his soul!" was whispered around.

"Companion," said William Machlinia, "is not this a hazardous enterprise?".

"I have encouragement," replied Wynkyn; "the Lady Margaret, his Highness' mother, gives me aid. So droop not, fear not. We will carry on the work briskly in our good master's house.—So fill the case."†

A shout almost mounted to the roof.

"But why should we fear? You, Machlinia, you, Lettou, and you, dear Richard Pynson, if you choose not to abide with your old companion here, there is work for you all in these good towns of Westminster, London, and Southwark. You have money; you know where to buy types. Printing *must* go forward."

"Always full of heart," said Pynson. "But you forget the statute of King Richard; we cannot say 'God rest his soul,' for our old master scarcely ever forgave him putting Lord Rivers to death. You forget the statute. We ought to know it, for we printed it. I can turn to

* These are the words with which this book closes.

† "Wynkyn de Worde this hath set in print,
In William Caxton's house:—so fill the case."
Stanzas to 'Scala Perfectionis,' 1494.

the file in a moment. It is the Act touching the merchants of Italy, which forbids them selling their wares in this realm. Here it is: 'Provided always that this Act, or any part thereof, in no wise extend or be prejudicial of any let, hurt, or impediment to any artificer or merchant stranger, of what nation or country he be or shall be of, for bringing into this realm, or selling by retail or otherwise, of any manner of books written or imprinted.' Can we stand up against that, if we have more presses than the old press of the Abbey of Westminster?"

"Ay, truly, we can, good friend," briskly answered Wynkyn. "Have we any books in our stores? Could we ever print books fast enough? Are there not readers rising up on all sides? Do we depend upon the court? The mercers and the drapers, the grocers and the spicers of the city, crowd here for our books. The rude uplandish men even take our books; they that our good master rather vilipended. The tapsters and taverners have our books. The whole country-side cries out for our ballads and our Robin Hood stories; and, to say the truth, the citizen's wife is as much taken with our King Arthurs and King Blanchardines as the most noble knight that Master Caxton ever desired to look upon in his green days of jousts in Burgundy. So fill the case."*

"But if foreigners bring books into England," said cautious William Machlinia, "there will be more books than readers."

"Books make readers," rejoined Wynkyn. "Do you remember how timidly even our bold master went on before he was safe in his sell? Do you forget how he asked this

* To "fill the case" is to put fresh types in the case, ready to arrange in new pages. The bibliographers scarcely understood the technical expression of honest Wynkyn.

lord to take a copy, and that knight to give him something in fee; and how he bargained for his summer venison and his winter venison, as an encouragement in his ventures? But he found a larger market than he ever counted upon, and so shall we all. Go ye forth, my brave fellows. Stay not to work for me, if you can work better for yourselves. I fear no rivals."

"Why, Wynkyn," interposed Pynson, "you talk as if printing were as necessary as air; books as food, or clothing, or fire."

"And so they will be some day. What is to stop the want of books? Will one man have the command of books, and another desire them not? The time may come when every man shall require books."

"Perhaps," said Lettou, who had an eye to printing the Statutes, "the time may come when every man shall want to read an Act of Parliament, instead of the few lawyers who buy our Acts now."

"Hardly so," grunted Wynkyn.

"Or perchance you think that, when our sovereign liege meets his Peers and Commons in Parliament, it were well to print a book some month or two after, to tell what the said Parliament said, as well as ordained?"

"Nay, nay, you run me hard," said Wynkyn.

"And if within a month, why not within a day? Why shouldn't we print the words as fast as they are spoken? We only want fairy fingers to pick up our types, and presses that Doctor Faustus and his devils may some day make, to tell all London to-morrow morning what is done this morning in the palace at Westminster."

"Prithee, be serious," ejaculated Wynkyn. "Why do you talk such gallymaufry? I was speaking of possible things; and I really think the day may come when one person in a thousand may read books and buy books, and

we shall have a trade almost as good as that of armourers and fletchers."

"The Bible!" exclaimed Pynson; "O that we might print the Bible! I know of a copy of Wickliffe's Bible. That were indeed a book to print!"

"I have no doubt, Richard," replied Wynkyn, "that the happy time may come when a Bible shall be chained in every church, for every Christian man to look upon. You remember when our brother Hunte showed us the chained books in the Library at Oxford. So a century or two hence a Bible may be found in every parish. Twelve thousand parishes in England? We should want more paper in that good day, Master Richard."

"You had better fancy at once," said Lettou, "that every housekeeper will want a Bible! Heaven save the mark, how some men's imaginations run away with them!"

"I cannot see," interposed Machlinia, "how we can venture upon more presses in London. Here are two. They have been worked well, since the day when they were shipped at Cologne. Here are five good founts of type, as much as a thousand weight—*Great Primer*, *Double Pica*, *Pica*—a large and a small face, and *Long Primer*. They have well worked; they are pretty nigh worn out. What man would risk such an adventure, after our good old master? He was a favourite at court and in cloister. He was well patronized Who is to patronize us?"

"The people, I tell you," exclaimed Wynkyn. "The babe in the cradle wants an Absey-book; the maid at her distaff wants a ballad; the priest wants his Pie; the young lover wants a romance of chivalry to read to his mistress; the lawyer wants his Statutes; the scholar wants his Virgil and Cicero. They will all want more the more they are supplied. How many in England have a book at all, think you? Let us make books cheaper by

O the right noble/right excellent & vertuous p̄nce George duc of Clarence Erle of warwyk and of Salysburye/grete chamberlayn of Englond & leutenant of Irelond oldest broder of kynge Edwardy by the grace of god kynge of England and of fraūce / your moste humble seruant william Caxton amonge other of your seruantes sendes vnto yow peas. helthe. Joye and victorye vpon your enemyes /

Caxton's Type.

printing more of them at once. The churchwardens of St. Margaret's asked me six-and-eightpence yesterday for the volume that our master left the parish;* for not a copy can I get, if we should want to print again. Six-and-eightpence! That was exactly what he charged his customers for the volume. Print five hundred instead of two hundred, and we could sell it for three-and-fourpence."

"And ruin ourselves," said Machlinia. "Master Wynkyn, I shall fear to work for you if you go on so madly. What has turned your head?"

"Hearken," said Wynkyn. "The day our good master was buried I had no stomach for my home. I could not eat. I could scarcely look on the sunshine. There was a chill at my heart. I took the key of our office, for you all were absent, and I came here in the deep twilight. I sat down in Master Caxton's chair. I sat till I fancied I saw him moving about, as he was wont to move, in his furred gown, explaining this copy to one of us, and shaking his head at that proof to the other. I fell asleep. Then I dreamed a dream, a wild dream, but one that seems to have given me hope and courage. There I sat, in the old desk at the head of this room, straining my eyes at the old proofs. The room gradually expanded. The four *frames* went on multiplying, till they became innumerable. I saw *case* piled upon *case;* and *form* side by side with *form*. All was bustle, and yet quiet, in that room. Readers passed to and fro; there was a glare of many lights; all seemed employed in producing one folio, an enormous folio. In an instant the room had changed. I heard a noise as of many wheels. I saw sheets of paper covered

* There is a record in the parish books of St. Margaret's of the churchwardens selling for 6*s.* 8*d.* one of the books bequeathed to the church by William Caxton.

with ink as quickly as I pick up this type. Sheet upon sheet, hundreds of sheets, thousands of sheets, came from forth the wheels—flowing in unstained, like corn from the hopper, and coming out printed, like flour to the sack. They flew abroad as if carried over the earth by the winds. Again the scene changed. In a cottage, an artificer's cottage, though it had many things in it which belong to princes' palaces, I saw a man lay down his basket of tools and take up one of these sheets. He read it; he laughed, he looked angry; tears rose to his eyes; and then he read aloud to his wife and children. I asked him to show me the sheet. It was wet; it contained as many types as our 'Mirror of the World.' But it bore the date of 1844. I looked around, and I saw shelves of books against that cottage wall—large volumes and small volumes; and a boy opened one of the large volumes and showed me numberless block-cuts; and the artificer and his wife and his children gathered round me, all looking with glee towards their books, and the good man pointed to an inscription on his book-shelves, and I read these words,

My Library a Dukedom.

I woke in haste; and, whether awake or dreaming I know not, my master stood beside me, and smilingly exclaimed, 'This is my fruit.' I have encouragement in this dream."

"Friend Wynkyn," said Pynson, "these are distempered visions. The press may go forward; I think it will go forward. But I am of the belief that the press will never work but for the great and the learned, to any purpose of profit to the printer. How can we ever hope to send our wares abroad? We may hawk our ballads and our merry jests through London; but the citizens are too busy

to heed them, and the apprentices and serving-men too poor to buy them. To the country we cannot send them. Good lack, imagine the poor pedlar tramping with a pack of books to Bristol or Winchester! Before he could reach either city through our wild roads, he would have his throat cut or be starved. Master Wynkyn, we shall always have a narrow market till the king mends his highways, and that will never be."

"I am rather for trying, Master Wynkyn," said Lettou, "some good cutting jest against our friends in the Abbey, such as Dan Chaucer expounded touching the friars. That would sell in these precincts."

"Hush!" exclaimed Wynkyn: "the good fathers are our friends; and though some murmur against them, we might have worse masters."

"I wish they would let us print the Bible though," ejaculated Pynson.

"The time will come, and that right soon," exclaimed the hopeful Wynkyn.

"So be it," said they one and all.

"But what fair sheet of paper is that in your hand, good Wynkyn?" said Pynson.

"Master Richard, we are all moving onward. This is English-made paper. Is it not better than the brown thick paper we have had from over the sea? How *he* would have rejoiced in this accomplishment of John Tate's longing trials! Ay, Master Richard, this fair sheet was made in the new mill at Hertford; and well am I minded to use it in our Bartholomæus, which I shall straightly put in hand, when the Formschneider is ready. I have thought anent it; I have resolved on it; and I have indited some rude verses touching the matter, simple person as I am:—

"For in this world to reckon every thing
Pleasure to man, there is none comparable
As is to read and understanding
In books of wisdom—they ben so delectable,
Which sound to virtue, and ben profitable;
And all that love such virtue ben full glad
Books to renew, and cause them to be made.

And also of your charity call to remembrance
The soul of William Caxton, first printer of this book
In Latin tongue at Cologne, himself to advance,
That every well-disposed man may thereon look;
And John Tate the younger joy mote [may] he brook,
Which hath late in England made this paper thin,
That now in our English this book is printed in."

"Fairly rhymed, Wynkyn," said Lettou. "But John Tate the younger is a bold fellow. Of a surety England can never support a paper-mill of its own."

"Come, to business," said William of Mechlin.

providence of God) the method of cutting (*incidendi*) the characters in a matrix, that the letters might each be singly cast, instead of being cut. He privately cut matrices for the whole alphabet; and when he showed his master the letters cast from these matrices, Fust was so pleased with the contrivance, that he promised Peter to give him his only daughter Christina in marriage; a promise which he soon after performed. But there were as many difficulties at first with these letters as there had been before with wooden ones; the metal being too soft to support the force of the impression: but this defect was soon remedied by mixing the metal with a substance which sufficiently hardened it." John Schoeffer, the son of Peter, who was also a printer, confirms this account, adding, "Fust and Schoeffer concealed this new improvement by administering an oath of secrecy to all whom they intrusted, till the year 1462, when, by the dispersion of their servants into different countries, at the sacking of Mentz by the Archbishop Adolphus, the invention was publicly divulged."

APPENDIX B.

Books Printed by Caxton.

To our first printer are assigned 64 works, from 1471 to 1491. We subjoin a list of them, furnished to the 'Penny Cyclopædia' by Sir Henry Ellis, Principal Librarian of the British Museum. In this list are included the French edition of the 'Recueil,' and the Oration of Russell, which are considered doubtful.

1. 'Le Recueil des Histoires de Troyes, compose par raoulle le feure, chapellein de Monseigneur le duc Philippe de Bourgoingne en l'an de grace mil ccccIxiiii.,' fol.

2. 'Propositio clarissimi Oratoris Magistri Johannis Russell, decretorum doctoris ac adtunc Ambassiatoris Edwardi Regis Anglie et Francie ad illustr. Principem Karolum ducem Burgundie super susceptione ordinis garterij,' &c., 4to.

3. 'The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye, composed and drawen out of diverce bookes of latyn into Frensshe by Raoul le ffeure in the yere 1464, and drawen out of frensshe in to Englisshe by William Caxton at the commaundement of Margarete Duchess of Burgoyne, &c., whych sayd translacion and werke was begonne in Brugis in 1468 and ended in the holy cyte of Colen 19 Sept. 1471,' fol.

4. 'The Game and Playe of the Chesse, translated out of the French, fynysshid the last day of Marche, 1474,' fol.

5. A second edition of the same, fol. (with woodcuts).

6. 'A Boke of the hoole lyf of Jason' (1475), fol.

7. 'The Dictes and notable wyse Sayenges of the Phylosophers, transl. out of Frenshe by lord Antoyne Wydeville Erle Ryuyeres, empr. at Westmestre, 1477,' fol.

8. 'The Morale Prouerbes of Christyne (of Pisa),' fol. 1478.

9. 'The Book named Cordyale; or Memorare Novissima, which treateth of The foure last Things,' begun 1478, finished 1480, fol.

10. 'The Chronicles of Englond,' Westm., 1480, fol.

11. 'Description of Britayne,' 1480, fol.

12. 'The Mirrour of the World or thymage of the same,' 1481, fol.

13. 'The Historye of Reynart the Foxe,' 1481, fol.

14. 'The Boke of Tullius de Senectute, with Tullius de Amicitia, and the Declamacyon, which laboureth to shew wherein honour sholde reste,' 1481, fol.

15. 'Godefroy of Boloyne; or, the laste Siege and Conqueste of Jherusalem,' Westm., 1481, fol.

16. 'The Polycronycon,' 1482, fol.

17. 'The Pylgremage of the Sowle;' translated from the French, Westm., 1483, fol.

18. 'Liber Festivalis, or Directions for keeping Feasts all the Yere,' Westm., 1483, fol.

19. 'Quatuor Sermones' (without date), fol.

20. 'Confessio Amantis, that is to saye in Englisshe, The Confessyon of the Louer, maad and compyled by Johan Gower, squyer,' Westm., 1483, fol.

21. 'The Golden Legende,' Westm., 1483, fol.

22. Another edition of 'The Legende,' sm. folio.

23. A third, 'fin. at Westmestre,' 20th May, 1483, fol.

24. 'The Booke callid Cathon' (Magnus), translated from the French, 1483, fol.

25. 'Parvus Chato' (without printer's name or date, but in Caxton's type), folio.

26. 'The Knyght of the Toure,' translated from the French; Westm. (1484), fol.

27. 'The Subtyl Historyes and Fables of Esope,' translated from the French, 1484, fol.

28. 'The Book of the Ordre of Chyvalry, or Knyghthode,' translated from the French (assigned to 1484), fol.

29. 'The Book ryal; or the Book for a Kyng,' 1484, fol.

30. 'A Book of the noble Historyes of Kynge Arthur and of certen of his Knyghtes, which book was reduced in to Englysshe by syr Thomas Malory Knyght,' 1485, fol.

31. 'The Lyf of Charles the Grete Kyng of Fraunce and Emperour of Rome,' 1485, fol.

32. Another edition of the same, 1485, fol.

33. 'Thystorye of the noble ryght valyaunt and worthy Knyghte Parys and of the fayr Vyenne, the doulphyns doughter of Vyennoys,' translated from the French, 1485, fol.

34. 'The Book of Good Maners,' 1486, fol.

35. 'The Doctrinal of Sapyence,' translated from the French, 1489, fol.

36. 'The Book of Fayttes of Armes and of Chyvalrye,' a translation from the first part of Vegetius de Re Militari, 1489, fol.

37. 'The Arte and Crafte to knowe well to dye,' translated from the French, 1490, fol.

38. 'The Boke of Eneydos, compyled by Vyrgyle,' translated from the French, 1490, fol.

39. 'The Talis of Cauntyrburye' (no date), fol.

40. Another edition (without date or place), fol.

41. 'Infancia Salvatoris,' 4to.

42. 'The Boke of Consolacion of Philosophie, whiche that Boecius made for his comforte and consolacion' (no date nor place), fol.

43. A collection of Chaucer's and Lydgate's Minor Poems, 4to.

44. 'The Book of Fame, made by Gefferey Chaucer,' fol.

45. 'Troylus and Creseyde,' fol.

46. 'A Book for Travellers,' fol.

47. 'The Lyf of St. Katherin of Senis,' fol.

48. 'Speculum Vite Christi; or the myrroure of the blessyd Lyf of Jhesu Criste,' fol.

49. 'Directorium Sacerdotum: sive Ordinale secundum Usum Sarum,' Westm., fol.

50. 'The Worke (or Court) of Sapience,' composed by John Lydgate, fol.

51. 'A Boke of divers Ghostly Maters,' Westm., fol.

52. 'The Curial made by Maystre Alain Charretier,' translated from the French, fol.

53. 'The Lyf of our Lady, made by Dan John Lydgate, monke of Burye,' fol.

54. 'The Lyf of Saynt Wenefryde, reduced into Englisshe,' fol.

55. 'A Lytel Tretise, intytuled or named The Lucidarye,' 4to.

56. 'Reverendissimi viri dni. Gulielmi Lyndewodi, LLD. et

ep̃i Asaphensis constitutiones provinciales Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ,' 24mo.

57. 'The Hystorye of Kynge Blanchardyne and Queen Eglantyne his wife,' fol.

58. 'The Siege of the noble and invyncyble Cytee of Rhodes,' fol.

59. 'Statuta apud Westmonasterium edita, anno primo Regis Ricardi tercii,' fol.

60. 'Statutes' made in the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Parliaments of Henry VII., folio. (The only fragment of this work known consists of two leaves.)

61. 'The Accidence' (mentioned in one of the sale catalogues of the library of T. Martin of Palgrave).

62. 'The Prouffytable Boke of mānes soule, called The Chastysing of Goddes Chyldren,' fol.

63. 'Horæ,' &c., 12mo, a fragment of eight pages, now at Oxford, in the library bequeathed to the Bodleian by the late F. Douce, Esq.

64. A fragment of a Ballad, preserved in a volume of scraps and ballads in the British Museum.

From the time of Caxton's press to that of Thomas Hacket, we have the enumeration of 2926 books in Dr. Dibdin's work. The 'Typographical Antiquities' of Ames and Herbert comes down to a later period. They recorded the names of three hundred and fifty printers in England and Scotland, or of foreign printers engaged in producing books for England, that flourished between 1474 and 1600. The same authors have recorded the titles (we have counted with sufficient accuracy to make the assertion) of nearly 10,000 distinct works printed amongst us during the same period. Many of these works, however, were only single sheets; but on the other hand, there are doubtless many not here registered. Dividing the total number of books printed during these 130 years, we find that the average number of distinct works produced each year was 75.

APPENDIX C.

To avoid encumbering the preceding pages with foot-notes upon particular passages, the author subjoins a list of the principal books which he has referred to, or consulted, in this imperfect sketch of the Life of the Father of English Printing:—

'Typographical Antiquities, or an Historical Account of the Origin and Progress of Printing in Great Britain and Ireland.' By Joseph Ames and William Herbert. 3 vols. 4to, 1785.

The same. Now greatly enlarged, with copious notes. By the Rev. Thomas Frognall Dibdin. 4 vols. 4to, 1810.

'Biographia Britannica.' By Andrew Kippis. Article, 'Caxton,' in vol. iii., 1784.

'Life of William Caxton.' Treatise, Library of Useful Knowledge. 1828.

'A Treatise on Wood Engraving, Historical and Practical.' With illustrations engraved on wood, by John Jackson. 1839.

'A Concise History of the Origin and Progress of Printing.' 1770.

'Introduction to the Literature of Europe.' By Henry Hallam. Vol. i., 1836.

'Philobiblion, a Treatise on the Love of Books.' By Richard de Bury. Translated by John B. Inglis. 1832.

'History of English Poetry.' By Thomas Warton. 4 vols. 8vo, 1824.

'The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer.' With an Essay on his Language and Versification, &c. By Thomas Tyrwhitt. 5 vols., 1830.

'Specimens of the Early English Poets,' to which is prefixed an

'Historical Sketch of the Rise and Progress of the English Poetry and Language.' By George Ellis. 3 vols., 1811.

'Illustrations of the Lives and Writings of Gower and Chaucer.' By the Rev. Henry J. Todd. 1810.

'Three Early English Metrical Romances.' Edited by John Robson for the Camden Society. 1842.

'Reliques of Ancient English Poetry.' By Thomas Percy. 3 vols., 1794.

'Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border.' By Sir Walter Scott. 'Introductory Remarks on Popular Poetry.' 1833.

'Sir Thomas More, or Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society.' By Robert Southey. 2 vols., 1831.

'Utopia.' Written in Latin by Sir Thomas More. Translated by Ralph Robinson. A new edition, by the Rev. T. F. Dibdin. 2 vols., 1808.

'The History of London.' By Thomas Maitland. 2 vols. folio, 1756.

'The New Chronicles of England and France.' By Robert Fabyan. Edited by Sir Henry Ellis. 2 vols. 4to, 1811.

'The History of the Twelve Great Livery Companies of London.' By William Herbert. 2 vols. 8vo, 1834.

'Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster.' By John Stow. Augmented by John Strype. 2 vols. fol., 1720.

'Sir John Froissart's Chronicles.' Translated by Lord Berners. 2 vols. 4to, 1812.

'Memoirs of Philip de Comines.' Translated by Mr. Uvedale. 2 vols. 8vo. 1723.

'Paston Letters. Original Letters, written during the Reigns of Henry VI., Edward IV., and Richard III.' By Sir John Fenn. A new edition, by A. Ramsay. 2 vols., 1840.

'Histoire des Ducs de Bourgogne.' Par M. de Barante. 10 vols. 8vo, 1836.

'Statutes of the Realm.' From original records and authentic manuscripts. Vol. ii., 1816.

'Memoirs of Wool,' &c. By John Smith. 2 vols., 1747.

'Extracts from the Issue Rolls of the Exchequer, Henry III. to Henry VI.' 1837.

'Historie of the Arrivall of Edward IV.' Edited by John Bruce for the Camden Society. 1838.

'Wardrobe Accounts of Edward the Fourth.' By Nicholas Harris Nicolas. 1830.

'Monasticon Anglicanum.' By Sir William Dugdale. Edition of 1817.

'Retrospective Review.' Vol. xv., Article, 'The Knight of the Tower's Advice to his Daughters.'

LONDON: PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET AND CHARING CROSS.

Knight, Charles
William Caxton, the first English printer
New ed.